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VOL 94 JANUARY 1989

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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

JANUARY 1989

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नया प्रकाशन !!

स्वामी विवेकानन्द

एक सचित्र जीवनी

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 94 JANUARY 1989 No. 1

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

VIVEKANANDA SPEAKS

Two or three days before Shri Ramakrishna's passing away, She whom he used to call 'Kali' entered this body (of mine).

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa dedicated me to Her, and I now believe that She guides me in everything I do, and does with me what She will....Yet I fought so long! I loved him (the Master) you see, and that was what held me. I saw his marvellous purity....I felt his wonderful love. His greatness had not dawned on me then. All that came afterwards.

Again, he said to me, "When you sing, He who dwells here (touching his heart) like a snake, hisses as it were, and then spreading the hood, quietly holds himself steady and listens to your music."

(Shri Ramakrishna) was all Bhakti without, but within he was all Jnana ; I am all Jnana without, but within my heart, it is all Bhakti. All that has been weak has been mine. All that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure, and bold, has been his inspiration, his words, and he himself.

My mistakes have been great, but everyone of them was from too much love. Would I never had any Bhakti!

That I went to America was not my doing. But the God of India, who is guiding her destiny, sent me.

With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me.

I am doing the Lord's work, and wherever He leads I follow.

I am sincere to the backbone, and my greatest fault is that I love my country only too well.

People are now flocking to me. Hundreds have now become convinced that there are men who can really control their bodily desires.

I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next ; and may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.

I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or

bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody and then let men and women settle their own fate.

Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being.

The older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel.

I have been criticised from one end of the world to the other as one who preaches the diabolical idea that there is no sin! Very good. The descendants of these very men will bless me as the preacher of virtue, and not of sin. I am the teacher of virtue, not of sin. I glory in being the preacher of light, and not of darkness.

I think I am beginning to see the Divine. I think I am slowly approaching that state when I shall be able to love the very "Devil" himself, if there were any.

I was never a missionary nor ever would be one—my place is in the Himalayas.

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere.

TO OUR READERS

In 1989 PRABUDDHA BHARATA, the oldest running monthly journal of India, is entering its 94th year.

The first issue of 1989 comes as a special number dedicated to the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Many eminent writers of East and West have contributed valuable articles enriching the number. We are grateful to all of them. During the last year, 1988, many writers, intellectuals, and devotees have contributed dissertations, essays, travelogues and other articles for the various issues of PRABUDDHA BHARATA. Many have enrolled themselves as life-subscribers of the journal. Many others have offered donations and help in various ways in order to keep the prestigious religiocultural journal going on with only Rs. 20/- per year in this age of rising prices.

We wish to develop the quality of printing and paper of this journal started under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda himself in 1896. We hope the general public, especially the lovers of India and the devotees of Swamiji, will come forward in large numbers to help us by enrolling themselves as Life-Subscribers, by offering donations and help, and finally by contributing writings which will fulfil Swami Vivekananda's vision of an AWAKENED INDIA.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on Swami Vivekananda's vision about the important role Mayavati Advaita Ashrama is destined to play in the neo-Vedanta movement of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

IDEALS OF SWAMIJI is based on a talk given by Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj. Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at the Vivekananda Vidyamandir, West Bengal.

SWAMIJI'S CONTRIBUTION TO VEDANTIC THOUGHT is by Revered Swami Tapasyanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS I SAW HIM is by late Swami Atulanandaji Maharaj who had the rare privilege of meeting Swamiji in America. The Swami, popularly known as Gurudas Maharaj, gave his impresions of his first meeting with Swamiji to a devotee, which were later collected and edited by Swami Vidyatmanandaji of Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of Gretz, France.

SWAMIJI AND THE WEST is an essay contributed by Revered Swami Hiranmayanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, after his recent trip to many Western Centres of the Ramakrishna Order.

HAIL! SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (A New Finding) is on an unpublished report on Swamiji by NEW YORK HERALD (February 3, 1895). The report discovered by Ray and Wanda Ellis of U.S.A., was offered to Marie Louise Burke, more known as Gargi, who had made out of this material a beautiful article for this special number of PRABUDDHA BHARATA.

NEED OF VIVEKANANDA TODAY is based on the presidential speech in the National Seminar on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda (1984) held in Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, by Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, Ex-Education Minister and National Professor of India.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE OF A COMPREHENSIVE SPIRITUALITY is by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, a senior trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

SWAMIJI'S GOSPEL OF MANLINESS is by Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Asst. Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

A LEGACY OF VIVEKANANDA (The Ashrama as model for Western Centres) is a talk delivered by Revered Swami Vidyatmanandaji at the Ganges Monastery, Chicago, in 1987.

VIVEKANANDA AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA is a well-documented paper on the impact of Swami Vivekananda on Shri Narayana Guru, Kumaran Asan and Dr. Palpu, the three important figures in the epoch-making social changes in Kerala in this century. Shri Shankari Prasad Basu, the well-known Vivekananda scholar, has written this paper after a laborious research tour in Kerala.

A PALACE FOR THE POOR: A TEMPLE OF LEARNING is a short write up on the well-known educational institution of the South, The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras. It is written by Swami Pitambaranandaji, Asst. Secretary of the Students' Home.

RAMAKRISHNA DARSHANAM is by Swami Paramarthanandaji of the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND WAR-TORN WORLD is a scholarly article contributed by Nina Stark of Boston, U.S.A.

VIVEKANANDA SOCIETY IN MOSCOW (A SOVIET ACADEMICIAN SPEAKS ON VIVEKANANDA) by Swami Purnatmananda, Jt. Editor, *Udbodhan*, is an interesting article based on the author's personal interview with the celebrated Soviet Academician Dr. E.P. Chelishev.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTION BUILDING—A MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE is by Dr. S. K. Chakravarty, a senior faculty member and Programme Director of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

SERVING GOD IN HOMELESS HUMANITY is an informative article on The Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, Rahara, the biggest orphanage and one of the outstanding educational Institutions of West Bengal. It is contributed by Swami Ramanandaji, Secretary of this centre of the Ramakrishna Order.

THE STORY OF DIVYAYAN by Swami Suddhavratanandaji, Secretary of The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi, is an interesting article on the first institution in India for the integrated tribal and rural development in the lines of national culture and education as envisaged by Swamiji.

THE MAYAVATI VISION OF VIVEKANANDA

(EDITORIAL)

As the pilgrim winds up the lonely nine kilometre road from the small hilly town of Lohaghat, he sees from a long distance a dark green mountain-top studded with thick pine and cedar forests and surrounded by clouds and mists. As he finally covers this long zig-zag way through the overgrowing Himalayan trees, he enters a small Ashrama compound with a scintillating garden of roses, dahlias, chrysanthemums, lilies and other flowers looking skyward in an all-engulfing silence. Beyond the few yards of the garden compound begins a yawning gorge running almost vertically down to a depth of several hundred feet into a still deeper and almost virgin forest of Oaks, far below which runs a small rivulet. Its murmuring sound one can hear in between the occasional waves of rustling sound of leaves in the thousands of trees all around. The pilgrim stands for a while and looks at the steep dark-green mountains towering up like giants on the three sides of the Ashrama. As he walks slowly to the Northern side, suddenly a magnificent vision opens before his eyes. He stands awed under the huge twin Oak trees of the Ashrama, and looks with an unspeakable sense of joy and wonder at the vast range of 250 miles of eternally snow-capped Himalayan peaks of Nanda Devi, Trisul, Nandakot, Panchachullee, Kamet, and others.

This is Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, a fulfilment of Vivekananda's Advaitic vision. Situated in the high altitude of 6,500 ft in the Kumaoon Himalayas, Mayavati rests against the valley of Champavat. The word Kumaoon is derived from *Kurmanchal*, the hill-top with the shape of the back of a tortoise which, according to Indian tradition, is auspicious for spiritual practices. It is in Champavat that the Pandavas were traditionally known to practise austerities during the days of the Mahabharata. A mile away on the Northern side of the Ashrama stands a hill-top with the remnants of an old fort where Shri Krishna is believed to have killed Vanasura, an incident described in the *Bhagavatam*.

* * * *

Mayavati life has got its own dimensions. In the semi-dark sunless days of continuous rain, clouds, mists, and Himalayan storms invading the valley like waves of death, life becomes cramping. In the days of severe winter when snows of hail storms of winter rain are scattered all over the Ashrama Campus, one forgets the pain of unbearable cold in the marvellous sight of snows. Through the Champavat hill-top Sunrays enter the Ashrama campus in the winter-days at 8.30 a.m. and by 4.30 p.m. the mellow sun hides behind the Dharamgarh Hills. Long nights of freezing cold bring the taste

of Himalayan austerity. Then the scene changes. In the days of early spring the entire valley is studded with rhododendrons and wild white roses. Days get warmer, bringing a feeling of seasonal rebirth. On bright, sunny days thousands of pines and cedars raise their crests above the horizon which look like spires and steeples of Alpine churches pointing heavenward. The deep dark forest of Oaks all around suddenly begins to glitter. The blue misty haze over the valleys brings to one a mystic feeling of the unearthly abode of gods in the Himalayan heights. Far down in the distant northern valley of Bishen a few huts look like tiny spots of white. On bright unclouded days the sky becomes deep blue and the snow peaks rise, tier above tier, majestically above the gorges, above the distant valleys, and finally above the region of clouds. In the golden-crimson sun-light of autumn and winter the immovable snow-peaks, the first visible manifestation of Shiva the Absolute, glitter. In the profound silence of Mayavati, one just looks awed at those white forms, calm and immaculately pure. The unstrung music rings in the Great Active silence, the *Maunam*, which brings a glimpse of the Illimitable Calmness, and unspoken Bliss which is Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. This is the home of Advaita which Vivekananda dreamt of.

* * * *

In London, he dreamt of an Advaita Centre in the Himalayas and the prophet's dream was realised through intense sacrifice of his two English disciples Captain Sevier and Mrs. Sevier who followed their master right from England to India. At Almora they first started this Advaita Ashrama, and later on shifted the Ashrama to Mayavati.

Vivekananda had been dreaming of such a centre for the realisation of his Advaitic vision since a long time. In 1894, he wrote to Haridas Beharidas Desai that his dream was to create a new generation of spiritual humanity who would be combining Eastern spirituality with Western dynamism. In 1896 from the West he wrote to a friend in Almora,

"I want to start a Math in Almora or near Almora rather." In November, he further explained his vision to the same friend,

"It will be a centre for work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together and them I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedanta in the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India."[1]

By 1898, Mayavati Ashrama started working and Vivekananda came to sanctify it after two years. In 1900 he spoke in the West about this ashrama, "But on the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. There I want to work out this idea about which I have spoken to you today. There are an Englishman and Englishwoman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn from their childhood that God is the spirit, and should be worshipped in spirit and truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit. That is the ideal. I do not know what success will come of it. Today I am preaching the thing I like. I wish I had been brought up entirely on that, without all the dualistic superstitions."[2]

When he first came to Mayavati on 3 January, 1901 he was nearing his end. Two years earlier the Seviers along with Vivekananda's monk-disciples started the Ashrama and waited for their Master's coming. But before Vivekananda came to Mayavati, Captain Sevier succumbed to the rigours

1. Eastern and Western Disciples. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta; Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 423.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Edition), vol 8:140.

and austerities of the early days. Quietly he died here, and they cremated his body near the rivulet below.

When Vivekananda got the sad news, he said of this faithful English disciple, "He died like a martyr." With a broken health but unyielding spirit Vivekananda finally came to charge this holy spot and inspire the Mayavati-inmates with his prophetic vision and power. The scenic beauty charmed him. From Mayavati he wrote,

"This place is very, very, very beautiful, and they have made it simply exquisite. It is a huge place several acres in area, and is very well-kept. I hope Mrs. Sevier will be in a position to keep it up in the future. She wishes it ever so much, of course."[3]

For fifteen days he enjoyed his stay in the midst of six feet snow of early January. He took walks along the Lake, and whistled to the tune of birds. One day he walked upto the highest mountain nearby, the Dharamgarh Hill-top which overlooks a most magnificent snow view of 400 miles at a stretch. There he wanted to build up a cottage and spend his last days. At Mayavati he inspired his disciples with the thundering voice of Advaita to be free, in this Advaita Ashrama, from the superstitions of rituals and worships, and to stand on the Infinite strength, knowledge and bliss of the SELF within. A disciple who was still continuing a private worship, realised his mistake when Vivekananda spoke to the Ashramites to banish all rituals for ever from this Home of Advaita in its purest form. Standing on the Advaitic vision he once said,

"Only by worshipping SELF can freedom be won. Even personal God is but the SELF objectified."[4]

* * * *

Vivekananda's master Shri Ramakrishna always looked at this beloved disciple as "the embodiment of the ATMAN." Vivekananda's own disciples saw in him the 'paragon of monistic Vedanta'. Like the blazing sun he wanted to give the 'smashing truth' of monistic Vedanta to the world. In April 1900, in San Francisco he mercilessly tore the veils of dualistic weaknesses that have enslaved human thinking for millenniums,

"There is no help for man. None ever was, none is, and none will be. Why should there be? Are you not men and women? Are the lords of the earth to be helped by others? Are you not ashamed? You will be helped when you are reduced to dust. But you are spirit. Pull yourself out of difficulties by yourself! Save yourself! There is none to help you—never was. To think that there is, sweet delusion.... We are so lazy, we do not want to do anything for ourselves. We want a Personal God, a Saviour or a Prophet to do everything for us.... No more of these superstitions bred through thousands of years! It takes a little hard work to become spiritual."[5]

It is this spirit that Vivekananda wanted to implant in the Himalayan centre of Mayavati.

* * * *

In Mayavati Vivekananda did not want to build up one more traditional Himalayan retreat for spiritual austerities where the seekers would subject themselves to severe physical mortification in order to attain liberation.

Cramping and life-denying situations in the midst of poverty, deprivation, and terrible austerities do sometimes create spiritual stalwarts. But Vivekananda was clear that this was no essential condition.

"It is a curious thing that the inner life is often most profoundly developed where the outer conditions are most cramping and limiting. But this is an accidental—not an essential—association, and if we set ourselves right here in India, the world will be 'rightened'. For are we not all one?"[6]

---

3. Ibid., 5:151.
4. Ibid., 7:57.
5. Ibid., 8:131-133.
6. Ibid., 5:227.

Vivekananda wanted Mayavati to be unique, a meeting point of the East and the West. The West gave freedom to society and produced social stalwarts. The East gave liberty to religion and produced spiritual stalwarts. What Vivekananda wanted is a combination of spiritual individualism of the East, and the social individualism of the West. Advaita must become practical. "Shankara left the Advaitta philosophy in the hills and forests, while I have come to bring it out of those places and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society," he said.

This convergence of transcendental aspiration and humanistic altruism, he explained to Sister Nivedita, "The history of the past has gone to develop the inner life of India and the activity (i.e. the outer life) of the West. Hitherto these have been divergent. The time has now come for them to unite. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was alive to the depths of being yet on the outer plane who was more active? This is the secret. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it also be as wide as the sky."[7]

He wanted from his followers the highest spiritual attainment along with social dynamism, the oceanic depth along with the expansion of the heavens, the head of Shankara with the heart of Buddha. This he learnt from his Master Shri Ramakrishna. Vivekananda's religion is an apotheosis neither of ritualistic luxury, nor of life-negating spiritual individualism absolutely heedless of human suffering. The Ramakrishna Order respects any and every action that releases the Divine Power, and the Godly qualities in human beings, be it in farm-yard or a friar's cloister. It is this aspect which Nivedita found as the crowning glory of the religion of Vivekananda.

The Mayavati monks ring no bell and offer no ritual worships. And yet no thoughts against rituals ever rise in their mind. Once a fortnight they sing the Ramanama, the holy name with which Shiva manifests His transcendent Shivahood. In the quiet Library room hang pictures of Christ, Buddha, Madonna, and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. No flowers are offered before them, and no hands are raised in salutations. Yet even the most casual visitor feels a sense of holiness and inner bliss as soon as he enters the silent compound. One even feels that to speak in this Home of Absolute Non-dualism is a sacrilege where Shiva meditates on the ATMAN. In Vivekananda's words "Jnana is creedlessness but that does not mean that it despises creeds. It only means that a stage above and beyond creeds has been gained.[8] The Jnani has to come out of all forms, to get beyond rules and books, and be his own book."[9]

In small wooden cells, the monks of Mayavati study, meditate, write, or work. When meditations are over, one goes to the wheatfield, or the cow-shed, and the others go to the Hospital or to the vegetable garden or for the editorial work. Spiritual struggles and aspirations are broad based. The haunting thought of Jivan-mukti, liberation in life, speaks volumes in the profound Mayavati silence to any genuine seeker. Yet the monks do not live only on cogitations of principles like, "Brahman alone is Real; the world is illusory." They are taught to turn round to see their own SELF in everything, and to know how the Infinite divinity in man is trying to manifest itself through the thousand of human activities. Vivekananda's words ring in their ears.

"Stand upon the SELF, then only can we truly love the world. Take a very very high stand. Knowing our Universal nature, we must look with perfect calmness upon all the panorama of the world."[10]

* * * *

7. Ibid., 5:227.

8. Ibid., 8:8.
9. Ibid., 8:10.
10. Ibid., 7:11.

Vivekananda's entire attitude to life was positive. Advaita philosophy which was traditionally believed to be a negation of life, and acceptance of the Transcendental as the only Reality, was given a new, positive, life-giving, altruistic, and humanistic dimension with Vivekananda. He said,

'All morality can be divided into the positive and the negative elements; it says either, "Do this", or "Do not do this". When it says, "Do not", it is evident that it is a check to certain desire which would make a man a slave. When it says, "Do", its scope is to show the way to freedom and to the breaking down of a certain degradation which has already seized the human heart.[11]

In Mayavati Advaita Ashrama Vivekananda implanted the positive advaitic vision. It was an altogether new experiment. But he dreamt of making it true at least in Mayavati on the broad and deep foundation of Advaita liberality. The West respects a nobel scientist. The religious Indians throng at the feet of a genuine spiritual leader. Could it not be possible for India to produce a new race of humanity, who would combine both? Vivekananda believed it could be and it must be. That is the historic significance of his master's life and message. That is why he said,

"The present adjustment will be the harmonising, the mingling of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him. To the Occidental he is a dreamer; to the Oriental the Occidental is a dreamer playing with ephemeral toys."[12]

* * * *

This exploration of Advaitic knowledge and its applications to life, is intellectually conveyed to thousands from Mayavati—the Home of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Here in this Himalayan abode of Advaita, Vivekananda brought a palingenesis, a rebirth of this first English journal of the Ramakrishna Order which first started publication from Madras, in 1896. The Himalayas has been the source of the highest knowledge and contemplation in India. Vyasa, Gaudapada, and even the epoch-maker Shankaracharya brought the light of knowledge from the Himalayan heights. And this knowledge flowed like Ganga through centuries, revitalising the holy land whenever the draught of materialism made life and society a spiritually starved desert devoid of divine aspirations. Like them Vivekananda, the prophet and epoch-maker, made Mayavati the Home of Knowledge, whose chief function will be the 'spiritualisation of the human race.'[13]

And this wisdom of Advaita must penetrate into all branches of human knowledge, not merely the scriptures, religious or sacred texts, but secular also.

"In our country we go down on our knees before the man who reads the Vedas, and we do not care for the man who is studying physics. That is superstition; it is not Vedanta at all. It is utter materialism. With God every knowledge is sacred. Knowledge is God. Infinite knowledge abides within every one in the fullest measure."[14]

But the highest dream of Vivekananda is that man must become Christs and Buddhas. Each one must become a prophet.

"There were times in olden days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world. In olden times, particular peculiar persons were, so to speak, selected by the operations of the laws of society to become prophets. The time is coming when we shall understand that to become religious means to become a prophet, that none can become religious until he or she becomes a prophet.[15]

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11. Ibid., 8:147.
12. Ibid., 4:155.
13. Ibid., 4:315.
14. Ibid., 8:137.
15. Ibid., 6:10.

"This, the training of prophets, is the great work that lies before us; and consciously or unconsciously, all the great systems of religion are working towards this one great goal."[16]

"If Jesus Christ was not perfect, then the religion bearing his name falls to the ground. If he was perfect, then we too become perfect."[17]

"If a thing happens once, it can happen again. If any human being has ever realised perfection, we too can do so."[18]

This vision of making prophets out of common man and woman is not just a dream. It is thought which makes a man. If one struggles to reach Everest he may reach, even if he fails to reach his destination, at least the lower peaks like Nanda Devi. If one chases the ideals of Christ, he may end by becoming a St. Matthew, or St. Francis. Many later-day Christian saints did, indeed, attain stigmata. These truths were forgotten or eclipsed.

What Vivekananda did is a powerful revival of faith in each man's immense possibilities—possibilities of even becoming a prophet. It is the powerful thought current of Advaita initiated by Vivekananda, that is knocking at the root of all dualistic faiths and creeds today. 'The days of esotericism is gone for ever,' he said to Nivedita, and in his celebrated lecture, "Is Vedanta the Future Religion?", he concluded with this prophetic hope,

"The hour comes when great men shall arise and cast off these Kindergarten of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the Spirit by the Spirit."[19]

Mayavati, Vivekanandas' Home of Advaita, echoes even today these words of the prophet. The final Advaita Testament of Mayavati was prepared by Vivekananda himself. It appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of January 1900, and began with the great revelation,

"In whom is the Universe, who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe; In Whom is the Soul, who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of Man; knowing Him—and therefore, the Universe—as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being, of Individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth—THE ONENESS OF ALL BEINGS. 'Dependence is misery, Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom."

Theory was not enough. Vivekananda's approach was practical. He clearly saw the future role of this Jnana-pitha and outlined its function which later on his disciples tried to translate into action.

"The main line along which the work is to be carried on are necessarily educational and consist of sending out trained teachers and issuing publications. Arrangements, therefore, are in course of progress for training Indian and European men and women side by side, for Advaita work in the East and West. All men and women who believe in the uplifting power of the Advaita and are ready to make their lives one with the GREAT LIFE and to help others in doing so, are invited to join the Ashrama and assist in the carrying out of its objects in the manner best suited to each individual circumstances."[20]

Perhaps it will take decades or even centuries to fulfil the Mayavati dream of a prophet who came to herald a new epoch for humanity.

Throughout the last nine decades Mayavati has made every effort to fulfil the dream of the prophet. Outstanding preachers of Vedanta, saintly personalities, and realised souls have come out of Mayavati,

16. Ibid., 6:11.
17. Ibid., 8:17.
18. Ibid., 8:17.
19. Prabuddha Bharata, January, 1900.
20. Complete Works; 5:435-436.

and have radiated the divinity of life both in the East and the West. Highest contemplation has been happily combined with the most down-to-earth action. It is at Mayavati that so great a personality as Swami Turiyananda once acted as the flyboy of the Prabuddha Bharata press.[21] This was in the early days of Mayavati when Captain Sevier himself would run the press, Mother Sevier would correct the proofs, and Swamis Swarupananda and Virajananda would write the first biography of Vivekananda, and collect the Complete Works, the Vedas for modern man. Monks would walk for days together a distance of ninety kilometres to the foothill town of Tanakpur in order to bring food-materials for the Ashrama. Those early Mayavati days of intense austerity have been recorded as the golden days of spiritual struggle in the annals of the Ramakrishna Order.

Ninety years have passed. Despite a few amenities like electricity and the Lohaghat-Mayavati road, Mayavati retains the same old Himalayan charm. Those snow-peaks have stood unchanged. Despite the barrenness of the hills in the horizon, Mayavati hills are covered with the same dark and deep woods. More visitors come in order to feel the living presence of the prophet in this Himalayan home of Advaita, where his message was to lift humanity, on the strength of the Self within, to the heights of prophets —a message much needed in these days of scientific reductionism and religious fundamentalism. In its own silence and sublimity, Mayavati fulfils the genuine seekers with the grace and power of the Spirit, and dreams of the day when the prophet's dream will be realised in its fulness.

21. Prabuddha Bharata, 1945, Golden Jubilee No. p. 16.

THE IDEALS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

One hundred and twenty five years have passed after the advent of Swami Vivekananda. A century has also passed after his founding of the Ramakrishna Order. Still we are remembering his life and message with all eagerness. It is because his life and message contains the solutions of not only the problems of India, but also those of today's world. Swamiji does not belong to any particular country or a particular group of people. He came as the apostle of the message of Shri Ramakrishna for the good of the entire world. Today we are slowly learning to see him in that global perspective. It took nearly a century to understand this much of Swamiji. It always takes a long time to grasp something great which can never be attained all of a sudden. Slowly such great ideas as those of Swamiji get based on firm foundations and begin to spread.

There is no problem of the world whose solution Swamiji did not give us. Time is perhaps not yet ripe to fully appreciate the true impact of the activities of his short-lived life. Once in the Belur Math compound, Swamiji soliloquised, "Only another Vivekananda could understand what this Vivekananda has done." This was no show of self-pride. Realising the immensity of the power of Shri Ramakrishna that worked through him, Swamiji spoke these words. Whatever he did was done only at the will of Shri Ramakrishna through an instrument known as Vivekananda. Swamiji was

absolutely devoid of self-pride. He always felt the grace of his master behind any good that was done through his own life. With an absolute objectivity Swamiji spoke these words and made an estimate of his own work. Who else but Swamiji could speak out such a prophetic utterance ?

With an intense pain in his heart Swamiji traversed the whole of India after his master's death. Shri Ramakrishna told him that there would be no leave for him until the Divine Mother's work was completed. The door to his Superconscious life was closed by Mother for the completion of Her work and She, the Keeper of the key, would unlock the door when the work was over. Swamiji dreamt of a life of uninterrupted samadhi in a Himalayan cave. Shri Ramakrishna did not allow him to realise that dream. The epochal mission for which Shri Ramakrishna was born could only be realised by an able successor. It needed a pure instrument by whom the work could be perfectly accomplished. Those who believe in Shri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of God on earth, feel that his advent was for the good of the world. He himself planned the work for the good of the world and gave responsibility of its proper imple mentation on Swamiji. Despite initial pro tests, Swamiji accepted with total surrender the work assigned by his Master and worked untiringly for the same unto the last day of his life. Swamiji's work was well-planned. He never looked upon his activities with a sense of pride: on the contrary he would feel overwhelmed seeing how his master's ideas were being disseminated through his own life.

To his brother-disciples Swamiji would say, "You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you.... Mother has been born to revive the wonderful shakti in India, and making her the nucleus, once more Gargis and Maitreyis will be born into the world." Even in those early days Swamiji realised that the life of Holy Mother would bring a revolutionary change in the world. That is why he insisted that his first duty was to establish a Math for Holy Mother. Then holy daughters would come and gather round the life of Holy Mother. Through them there would come a regeneration of women which will bring a great awakening in India leading to an awakening in the whole world. His wide, liberal vision envisaged not the welfare of any particular nation, but of the entire world. That welfare would be so broad-based that it would spread to every sector of life.

Those who want to follow Swamiji's ideals will find that his plan of work is clearly defined in his books and literature. If we try to translate his plan of action with all our might, then nothing will be impossible for us.

Swamiji said that he did not want a mere superficial reform, but a root and branch reform. That root of which Swamiji spoke is the spirituality of India. Behind all our developments would be our spiritual awakening. Without this it would not be possible to steer the right path.

Next Swamiji stressed on education. A true man-making education we must spread everywhere. Whether it is religion or education, Swamiji wanted it to spread to the common masses, instead of confining it to particular groups of people. In our country we have got many spiritual stalwarts and educationists. The treasures they left behind, must be available to everyone. Then only a true awakening will come among the masses. Behind every awakening, there must be a set of higher values and ideals, otherwise the awakening will end in a mere social movement and nothing permanently good would come out of it. Swamiji laid the greatest stress on these higher values in life without which all efforts will turn ineffectual.

Each individual must have a total development which means the manifestation of the innate divinity in all of us. Swamiji could never feel satisfied with the development of a few individuals. He wanted the development of all, and for this he sacrificed his life. Not only that, he said that he would not have liberation so long even one individual remains unliberated. We should be inspired by this broad, liberal outlook. He wanted each one of us to feel for others. That is why he brought 'Practical Vedanta' which will always inspire us, make us conscious about our ideal, and bring real good to us. No work of education, religion, or social welfare will become fruitful unless it is based on the vision of God in every being. Conflicts of creeds and opinions will exhaust all our energy, instead of doing real good to us. Swamiji stressed most on the total welfare—Physical, mental, social, and spiritual—of entire mankind. We must imbibe this universal outlook from him, otherwise all our efforts will be narrow and limited. Repeatedly Swamiji reminded us that our lives are meant for the good of others, not merely for ourselves. He wanted each one of us to sacrifice, like himself, all self-interests for the good of the world. Unless we can make this total sacrifice of self-interests, we cannot truly accept him despite all our honour and worship offered to him. We have to remember what Swamiji wanted and see for ourselves what we are doing. It is needless to look at Swamiji as an individual person. He said, "I am a voice without a form." He is only the embodiment of his master's message which is of primary importance. Whether we accept Swamiji or not, we will be walking on the right path if we follow his ideals.

Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji are only three forms of one single ideal. If we respect Shri Ramakrishna we will be able to accept Holy Mother also. And if we accept Mother, we will be able to accept her son Swamiji, too. To preach Swamiji means to preach his ideals, of which he is the embodied form. Why did he want the rise of India ? If India rises, then the ideals of India will inspire the rest of mankind. This he repeatedly said to us. That is why we call him a patriot-saint, and not just a patriot. India, in his vision, was the embodiment of eternal spiritual ideals which made the nation survive through various vicissitudes, and she must deliver her message for which the world is waiting. The entire past, present, and future of India, were clear before his vision, and seeing the future role which India has to play in saving mankind, Swamiji gave highest respect to India. It is not just nationalism, but respect to the ideals embodied in the nation.

Each year we celebrate Swamiji's birthday with so much of festivities, discussions, etc. But then again we are buried in our characteristic stupor. Swamiji said this is not the time to sleep. We have to give all our energies in assisting the epochal change that has begun after the advent of Shri Ramakrishna. He reminded us to keep the spirit of renunciation burning, by which we will be able to do real good to the world. Upanishads said that some persons attained immortality through 'renunciation'. Swamiji altered it and added, by 'renunciation alone', one can attain immortality.

Shri Ramakrishna said, "My child, nothing can be achieved without renunciation." Without it we achieve neither dharma (religion), nor ethics. Wealth is temporary ; it leads to nothing. Let us be established in the spirit of renunciation. Renunciation here means not merely leaving the home behind, but giving up selfishness. We can be proud of being true followers of Swamiji only when we have succeeded in totally banishing our self-interests.

We have, therefore, to control our lives accordingly. The motto for Swamiji's

monastic Order was, "For one's own liberation and for the good of the world." He wanted individual liberation along with the welfare of humanity ; because seeking merely personal salvation would be selfishness. Shri Ramakrishna also said, "I have got no liberation. I have to come again and again for the good of the world." Swamiji said, "I do not want liberation, I will come again and again." This message of Swamiji will inspire strength in us, and make us realise that our real duty is to give up all self-interests. Our unselfish service to the people must be based on steadfast devotion. Let us not confine our service within some welfare activities only. Service means serving the people with the consciousness that God is in every being. The Ultimate Reality, Brahman, is everywhere, in all beings. HE pervades the universe. We serve HIM. Service with this spirit will bring real good to the world. We have forgotten the true values of religion and confined it within narrow limits of rituals and festivities. Just as we have brought narrow partisanship in politics, in social service also the ghost of narrow groupism has haunted us. Vedanta teaches us to respect and serve the Divine in all beings. That is why Swamiji gave to Vedanta philosophy such a high place. The entire world today is in need of this ideal, otherwise there would be no end of conflict among creeds, nations, sects, and groups. There will be no peace in the world so long as one nation tries to become richer at the expense of another nation. That is why even after ninety years of Swamiji's death we have to realise and feel that the only way to peace is through self-sacrifice. When men will have no further desire to work for selfish ends, then only the world will be benefitted by their lives.

I pray to Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji to bless us so that their spirit of unselfish service and self-sacrifice for God in humanity, inspire our lives, and bring real good to the world through whatever little we can offer.

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* (This article is based of Rev. Maharaj's talk delivered on 22.2.88 in Vivekananda Vidya Bhavana, West Bengal.)

SWAMIJI'S CONTRIBUTION TO VEDANTIC THOUGHT

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

To go into the details of Swami Vivekananda's works is not within the scope of a small article like this, as they include within their scope the whole of Vedic revelation and all its elaborations that have taken place up to date. But a few striking features of what constitutes the contribution of his genius, are given here in brief.

(1) He defined Veda, the *Shabdapramana* (scriptural authority) of the spiritual realm, like the scientific laws of the material world. It is in this sense that the Veda is eternal, and *Apaurusheya* (not man-made), the Rishis being only discoverers of pre-existing laws of Nature. Thus he freed the *Shabdapramana* of the Vedantins from the encrustations of scholasticism, which made it incomprehensible to those who are unacquainted with the Mimamsaka technicalities.

(2) He maintained that the Vedic revelation includes in its scope all stages of man's spiritual evolution, which are known to Indian thinkers as dualism (Dvaita), quilified monism (Vishishta-advaita) and monism (Advaita). They are not mutually conflicting as was supposed to be in the past, but

complementary to one another, one leading to the other with man's spiritual evolution. All cults forming the core of world religions can be accommodated within this frame-work.

(3) He separated the spiritual contents of Vedic revelation from the setting of *Varnashrama* social system in which it was embedded according to its exponents of the past, and presented it as the universal philosophy of religion applicable to all creeds, societies and countries.

(4) He presented the Supreme Being as Personal-Impersonal. The Impersonal is not the negation or falsification of the Personal but the fulfilment of It—a necessary implication in the conception of It for assuring Its validity. All the ideas of the Supreme Being comprised in the conceptions of Him as the other, the Immanent and the Non-dual are true and valid from their respective points of view or frames of reference. They are like photographs of the sun taken from different levels, all of them being versions of the same entity, complementary to one another.

(5) Anthropomorphism is an unavoidable element in all such human conceptions of God. It is even so with scientific knowledge, because the reading and interpretation of the data of science are done by the human mind. In philosophic monotheism, where the theologian still looks upon God as the other, there is always the need for an anti-God, a Devil, or Satan to account for evil. When monotheism rises to the level of an Immanent Deity, He is perceived as the source of both Vidya and Avidya, of the liberating forces of good and of the binding forces of evil, of beauty, and of awe, of life and of death—in fact of the functions of both a God and a Devil. When unitary consciousness is realised, the ethical dualism of good and evil disappears.

This state of mind wherein the polarisation of the ethical sense is overcome, the Swami put once in a forthright way in one of his talks in the West, sending waves of shock through the minds of his cultured audience. He said: "...We should look upon man in the most charitable light. It is not so easy to be good. What are you but mere machines until you are free? Should you be proud because you are good! Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it, If you are in his position, who knows what you would have been. The woman in the street, or the thief in the jail, is the Christ that is being sacrificed that you may be a good man. Such is the law of balance. All the thieves and the murderers, all the unjust, the weakest, the wickedest, the devils, they are all my Christ! That is my doctrine. I cannot help it. My salutation goes to the feet of the devilish! ... They are all my teachers, all are my spiritual fathers, all are my saviours. I may curse one and yet benefit by his failings; I may bless another and benefit by his good deeds. This is as true as I stand here. I have to sneer at the woman walking in the street, because society wants it. She, my saviour, she whose street-walking is the cause of the chastity of other woman! Think of that! Think, men and women, of this question in your mind. It is a truth—a bare bold truth! As I see more of the world, see more of men and women, this conviction grows stronger. Whom shall I blame? Whom shall I praise? Both sides of the shield must be seen."

(6) *Tat tvam asi*—That Thou art—is the cryptic statement made of the relation between the Jiva and Ishwara in Vedanta. The pure Advaita Vedanta interprets it as meaning by implication that the Jiva and Ishwara are identical as Brahman, when their Upadhis or adjuncts are eliminated. The qualified Advaitins admit identity as inseparable oneness of parts in the Organic Whole constituted of Jagat (world), Jiva (soul) and Ishwara (God), collectively known as Brahman. The pure Dualists negate iden-

tity, but maintain that the Jiva is an entity which has no existence independent of Brahman. Swami Vivekananda accepted all these schools of Vedanta as valid, as different points of view according to the development of man's spiritual insight. He has not anywhere indulged in the logical discussions of *Tat tvam asi* like the great Acharyas of the past, as he concerned more with the practicality of Vedanta than its verbal logicality. In place of entering into interminable logical quibbles, he interpreted this Vedantic dictum to mean—"Every soul is potentially Divine." Swamiji maintains this doctrine as the sheet-anchor of Vedanta. 'Potential' means that, though a Jiva appears now in the state of ignorance as a weak and inconsequential entity as against the mighty Nature, it has got the capacity in it to gradually evolve to higher and higher states and attain to the Divine Status, in whatever way you may define that Status from the logical point of view. It is just like this: a spark of fire may look small and insignificant, but it has got all the potentialities of a mighty conflagration. Vedanta, Swamiji maintained, wants man to adopt measures for the actualisation of this potential Divine in him, and all the Sadhanas of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana are meant for this purpose. Evolution at the physical level has achieved its end with the perfection of the human body. The next stages of evolution consist in the gradual development of this inherent Divinity. Human society and civilisation will become meaningful only through the acceptance of this Vedantic outlook and its application to the individual and collective life of man. Thus Swamiji converted the great Vedantic dictum of *Tat tvam asi* from a jumble of logical disputations into the key for human development, individual and collective.

(7) Although the Swami rose above any sectarian view of Vedanta, he often used the language and ideology of Advaita Vedanta in his lectures. We have seen the new turn he has given to several of its concepts like revelation, Karma, Jiva, Brahman, Mukti, etc. Another inportant Vedantic concept on which he has spoken is the doctrine of Maya. The word Maya is used in different meanings. In a theological sense it is the power of God, and this is very clearly stated in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*. But in philosophical sections of the Upanishads like the *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya*, it is vaguely implied in an ontological role when describing acosmism. But we do not find any clear formulation of it as a doctrine. In the hands of Buddhist thinkers, it got the meaning of an illusory appearance. Besides the idea of the power of God, Vedanta also absorbed a shade of this meaning of illusory appearance in its post-Buddhistic development. This new development was necessitated in Upanishadic thought, because in a doctrine of Reality as non-dual, an explanation has to be given for the experience of multiplicity by assigning to it some kind of ontological status. As it is actually experienced by all, to deny any reality to it and call it an illusion, will be madness. So the world experience is called *bhava rupam* or something positive in nature, an intermediary reality. Yet it is described as neither Sat (real) nor Asat (unreal) nor a combination of both, and therefore, fit to be called an indeterminate existence (Anirvachaniyakhyati). While the Advaitic thinkers interpret Maya in this way, they also use in describing Maya the analogy of snake in the rope and water in the mirage of the desert, which are pure illusions. How can the status of a relative or intermediary reality and also of an illusory appearance be given to the same entity ? The answer given is that they are given from two standpoints—the former from that of ignorance of relative reality (*vyavahara*) while the latter is from that of enlightenment or ultimate reality (*paramartha*). The advocates of

Advaita feel they have explained everything by this analysis of experience into these two contradictory levels. But the critics of Advaita are not satisfied with it, and they direct their broadsides in their controversy with the Advaitins against Maya-vada and the double status of reality. This controversy has been so pronounced and longdrawn in the later development of polemical Vedanta, that the Brahma-vada of the Upanishads has been eclipsed by the Maya-vada of philosophers.

Now where does Swami Vivekananda come amidst this endless controversial postures ? An impartial but critical reader of his works will feel that his position is rather unclear. In many places he uses the analogy of 'snake in the rope' and 'mirage in the desert', but he does not do so when he systematically discusses the Maya theory in his three lectures on the subject in his Jnana Yoga. There he gives an original view. He says that Maya is not a theory or an explanation at all, but the statement of a fact—the fact that the world and its experiences are so ridden with contradictions that one cannot have an understanding of it and reconcile it with his logical or ethical sense. So man should direct his quest into what transcends it. Swamiji's position therefore seems to be that it is useless to enter into the endless controversy. On the other hand we must learn its spiritual implication, that it is vanity to be engrossed with the fleeting and trivial values of the world. So cultivate non-attachment and develop yearning for Truth.

It is also very significant that according to him man in spiritual matters is not going from error to truth, but going from lower truth to higher truth. He illustrates this by the analogy of the photographs of the sun from different levels. The photos vary, but the one from a neared level does not falsify the preceding one, but only represents a nearer approach to the same truth that they all embody. If this interpretation is accepted, *Vyavahara* and *Paramartha* cease to be contradictories with no middle ground between, but only contraries linked together by an ascending scale of values. In this view, *Mithyatva* or falsity is rid of the shadow of illusoriness cast on it by the analogies of the 'snake in the rope' and of 'water in the desert' in a mirage.

(8) While accepting the traditional idea of Mukti as liberation from the cycle of births and deaths, he freed the conception from a touch of escapism that surrounded it, by redefining it as the manifestation of the Divinity already latent in man. Perfection as opposed to escape from an unpleasant situation—he placed this as the ideal for competent aspirants.

(9) In fact towards the closing period of his life he taught that there is no liberation until one ceases to want liberation ; for seeking liberation is a selfish quest, and man does not reach perfection until he is able to overcome self-centredness completely. When once questioned about the characteristic of an Incarnation, he answered it indirectly, stating that there was a time in his early life when the longing for Mukti was so strong in him that he once entered a cave and decided to fast and die there if he did not gain Mukti. 'But', he continued, 'the very thought of Mukti does not come to my mind now.' It may be contended that his attitude had changed in this way because he had already attained Mukti. While that may be conceded, we have to recognise the point he wants to drive home—that the quest for Mukti should not become a self-centred quest like the striving for a possession or position. It should be a natural fulfilment resulting from the erosion of self-centredness through unselfish service, discrimination, and self-discipline. He did not therefore pose any absolute opposition between work and knowledge (i.e. spiritual practice), as some Vedantic teachers do.

This attitude of his springs from his novel interpretation of Pravritti and Nivritti based on the root meaning of the words. Pravritti literally means 'move toward', and Nivritti, 'move away from'. He therefore interpreted these two cardinal words—the first as 'moving towards the life of self-centredness' and the second as 'moving away from self-centredness', whereas the old Acharyas interpreted them as 'moving into involvement in work', and 'moving away from involvement in work'. So for the old Acharyas the pursuit of Moksha meant cessation from all work ultimately, whereas for Swamiji it meant cessation from selfishness. So in his scheme of salvation unselfish work has an equal place of importance with other disciplines. He attached equal importance to all the four Yoga—Bhakti, Karma, Raja and Jnana Yogas. But he maintained that whether one followed any of them singly or in combination, one should always have a place for Karma, unselfish work, in one's scheme of spiritual discipline.

(10) His outlook in these respects largely reflected his gradual leaning to the doctrine of Sarva-Mukti—salvation as a collective achievement. In the Vedantic tradition this doctrine was first adumbrated by Appayya Dikshita. For Appayya Dikshita, however, it was more a theological necessity, as he was a champion of Eka-Jiva-Vada—the doctrine of the singleness of all Jivas. It means there is only one Jiva, Hiranyagarbha, who is reflected as many Jivas in different adjuncts (Upadhis). So all Jivas can, according to him, attain Mukti only collectively with the Hiranyagarbha at the end of the cosmic cycle when the term of the Hiranyagarbha's life is over. For Swami Vivekananda, however, it was more a compulsion of the heart, parallel to the Buddhist doctrine of the Bodhisattva, according to which an aspirant, motivated by *Mahakaruna* or universal love, abandons his own Nirvana in order that he may work for the Nirvana of all labouring in the cycle of birth and death . The Swami has not elaborated this doctrine in any of his speeches, but has only expressed his preference for it in his discussions with disciples. He himself doubted the soundness of its metaphysics, but yet urged its acceptance, and expressed his own readiness to stand the sufferings of Samsara for all time in order to bring enlightenment to Jivas in bondage. Truly, as his Great Master foretold about him, he was like a tree standing all the heat of the sun, affording shelter from that heat to all who wished to come under its shadow.

(11) His intense humanism also found expression in his doctrine of Practical Vedanta. Vedanta in the past was practical only for recluses who sought salvation by self-realisation. But Swamiji maintained that the fundamental Doctrine of Vedanta, namely, the basic Divinity of the Jiva, has a message for men in all stations of life. It can be an instrument for the re-education of the ego into a new consciousness of one's inherent strength, and thus promote man's self-confidence and power of self-expression. Next, practical Vedanta conveys the teaching that man is the best symbol for the worship of the Deity. While the Swami accepted prayer to the Deity and adoration of Him in temples and through meditation on Him as an essential part of spiritual discipline, he stressed that an equally important aspect of worship lies in the service of God in man. Thus a true Vedantin can work out a programme of education, health, social uplift etc., not merely as secular service, but as worship of God in man—a discipline equal to, if not more potent than, the traditionally accepted forms of worship. Thus for him the Yogas of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma become an integrated discipline.

(12) In a small write-up like this, these profound doctrines cannot be elaborated more. The wide-ranging legacy he has left for the world in the spiritual field cannot

be better expressed than in the following aphoristic dicta of his:

> Each soul is potentially Divine.
> The goal is to manifest this Divine within by controlling Nature, external and internal.
>
> Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.
>
> This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.
>
> These can form the Neo-Brahmasutras, on which future Vedantic scholars can write commentaries.*

* The above article is a section from "Swami Vivekananda—His Life and Legacy" published by Shri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS I SAW HIM

SWAMI ATULANANDA

I remember how one afternoon I came to the Vedanta Society in New York with a large picture of Jesus in my hand. The Swami asked me what I had there. I told him that it was a picture of the Christ talking to the rich young man. "Oh, let me see it," he said eagerly. I handed him the picture. And never shall I forget the tenderness in his look when he held the picture and looked at it. At last he returned it to me with the simple words: "How great was Jesus!" And I cannot help thinking that there was something in common between these two souls.

The doctrine of sin and eternal hell-fire is one of the doctrines on which orthodox Christian preachers love to harp. Man is born in sin, his nature is sinful. It is only through the grace of God that man can be saved. Now, Swamiji used to hold question classes in New York. And everyone was invited to ask any question he wished. So one evening an old church-lady asked him why he never spoke of sin.

There came a look of surprise on Swamiji's face, "But madame," he said, "blessed are my sins. Through sins I have learnt virtue. It is my sins as much as my virtues that have made me what I am today. And now I am the preacher of virtue. Why do you dwell on the weak side of man's nature? Don't you know that the greatest blackguard often has some virtue that is wanting in the saint? There is only one power, and that power manifests itself both as good and as evil. God and the devil are the same river with the water flowing in opposite directions." The lady was shocked and horrified. But others understood.

And then the Swami began to speak of the divinity that resides in every man, how the soul is perfect, eternal and immortal; how the Atman resides in every being. And he quoted from the Gita: "Him the sword cannot cut, Him the fire cannot burn, Him the water cannot wet, Him the wind cannot dry. Eternal, all-pervading, immortal is the soul of man."

For you, my friends who are born in India, it must be difficult to realise what all this meant in the West—to us who had chafed all our lives under the terrible doctrines of the churches—that man is impotent, a miserable creature at the mercy of a whimsical, autocratic God, the sword of damnation always hanging over one's head, bond-slaves at the mercy of a Potentate to save or damn as he pleases.

Then came the strength-giving words from the Upanishads: "Brahman alone is Real; everything is unreal, and the human soul is that Brahman, not different from it." Here was hope, here was strength. "Every man is potentially divine. Realise it and be free!"

Do you see what a consolation Swamiji's teaching to those who had searched but had not found; to those who had knocked but unto whom it had not been opened? To them Swamiji came as a saviour. He came to the door of their own hearts and knocked. And blessed were they who opened the door to receive the flow of benediction that came with his presence.

I will not attempt to tell you what Swami Vivekananda's mission was in other directions, what he has done for the land of his birth by waking up his countrymen; by presenting India to the world in her true garb; by removing wrong impressions we in the West had about the Hindus; by placing India where she belongs in the intellectual and spiritual world. Suffice it for me to give you my impressions of his mission in the West as the bearer of light and wisdom, as the consoler of the heart, as the friend, the guide, the teacher of nations groping in spiritual darkness.

Not long ago I was asked by a Hindu friend of mine to state in a few words what was the mission of Swami Vivekananda. You know, people love to throw bombshells and see them explode. My friend was evidently expecting such an explosion. But I fear he was disappointed.

Now, I do not believe in pigeonholing men like Swamiji. It is utter silliness to attempt to explain his mission in one sentence. And in the second place I was not prepared for the question. So, though the question acted somewhat like a bombshell on my brain, I must confess that the explosion was rather feeble. And my friend was evidently disappointed.

I replied rather hesitantly that Swamiji came to enlighten the world.

"To enlighten the world?" my friend said with scorn. "We have light enough. Swamiji came to make *men*." I could not deny it, for at once flashed through my mind Swamiji's own words: "My religion is a man-making religion."

Now I think that both these answers are typical, the one expressing Swamiji's mission to the East, the other his mission to the West. Yes, my friend was right. You in India have light abundant. Your scriptures are like the shining sun that dispels the darkness of ages. But remember, that sun was shining very dimly even in your own land until Swamiji removed the intervening clouds.

You had turned your back towards the light, and you were looking at your own shadow. It was Swamiji who told you to turn around and face the light. Your gaze was directed westward. From the West you expected light and help and inspiration. Then Swamiji made it clear to you that not by imitating western life could India be raised; but by turning towards your own scriptures, by studying the culture of your own motherland you would become *men*.

And as my friend remarked that there is light enough in India, that India needed *men*, so I might have retorted that the West has plenty of *men*, that we needed light.

But, are these the kind of men that Swamiji wanted? Yes, muscles of iron and nerves of steel the West has. A good deal of brain, even. Swamiji would not have told *us* in the West that by playing football we would be better able to understand the Gita. Strength there is, indomitable will-power, perseverance, courage, integrity. Who shall deny it? But was that all that Swamiji wanted of a *man*?

Brute force we find abundant in the West. But how is that force applied? Is it used

as a medium to elevate us above the brute creation ? Has it made us *real* men ? That is the question.

Do you see that strength is a foundation on which to raise a noble, refined character, as a basis on which the higher, the moral, the spiritual man takes his stand ?

Swamiji wanted *men*, but not brutes. He wanted man, the highest product of evolution ; man the master of his lower nature, the king of creation.

And what did Swamiji mean by strength ? "Strength! Strength! I have only taught strength!" he exclaimed when questioned about his work.

But what kind of strength ? Do you remember how he would repeat again and again Shri Krishna's admonition to Arjuna when the latter in a moment of mental confusion dropped bow and arrow and sank down in his chariot overcome by grief ? "Whence this weakness ?" exclaimed Lord Krishna. "At critical moments to fall back and shrink from one's duty is mean. It does not befit thee, Arjuna! Remember you are an Aryan! Stand up, and quit thee like a man!"

Swamiji wanted that kind of strength. Strength that leads to the conscientious performance of dharma, be it in social functions or in a life of withdrawal from worldly affairs.

Renunciation, we were taught, must be the backbone of our life, in the world as well as in solitude.

In the West we had enough of worldly activity. So in London Swamiji told his disciples: "What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God! What the world wants is character, men of burning selfless love. Remember, man is the highest being that exists. *Man is God*. But that man must be pure and strong and selfless, and stripped of worldly ambitions."

"One great theme," so writes a friend to me from California, "one great theme was carried through all the Swami's teachings. And that was the necessity of spiritual self-reliance."

"Religion is for the strong!" he shouted again and again. "Be brave! Be strong! Be fearless! Once you have taken up the spiritual life, fight! Fight as long as there is any life in you! Even though you know that you are going to be killed, fight till you *are* killed! Don't die of fright! *Die fighting*! Don't go down till you are knocked down!"

Then with his right hand extended, he thundered: "Die game! Die game! Die game!" These were his farewell words to his disciples in California, his good-bye.

That is what Swamiji wanted of his *men*. The demand was high, but he could not be satisfied with anything less.

Renunciation was Swamiji's badge. It is true, in the West he had often to accept a life of luxury. But his friends knew that his inner soul was always at the feet of his master ; that to him he looked for inspiration, that from him he received the command.

That burning love for God and Truth, his absolute selflessness, his love and sympthy for the high and low alike, are what made Swamiji so dear to his western disciples. They felt instinctively that it was his own heart that spoke when he quoted an ancient Rishi: "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that dwell in higher spheres! For I have found that ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion. And knowing him, ye also shall be saved from death."

And then Swamiji departed. He left for distant shores. But his voice seemed to have lingered behind. And in hours of soli-

tude, when the heart felt sad and longed for one look, for one word from the beloved but departed master, that voice seemed to speak and whisper, "Go within, all knowledge is there. Hearest thou not? In thine own heart, day and night goes on that eternal song, Sacchidananda, Shivoham, Shivoham."

And now, as we look back and reflect on what heritage Swami Vivekananda has left to the West, we would point first of all to those who were his disciples, those living monuments, chiselled by his own hands, men and women, always ready to testify to the debt they owe to their master. We would point to the *men* and *women* he has made, men and women ready to live and die for him.

We would point to the lives he has changed, to those whom he has brought to the feet of his own divine master. We would point to his brother sannyasins now spreading his message in foreign lands.

And then we would point to that encyclopedia of spiritual wealth, his lectures and writings, now printed and widely circulated all over the world in different languages. Through these scriptures his voice may still be heard. Through them his spirit is still working. To these scriptures, for ages to come, East and West alike will look for light and guidance.

We would point to the Vedanta societies now flourishing in America; and lastly, to a quiet place of retreat in the sunny hills of California, the Shanti Ashrama, our first ashrama in America. Here, and in the Ananda Ashrama, people go today to live a spiritual life.

And now, if you ask me what made Swami Vivekananda so wonderfully successful in the West, we would answer that it was his eloquence, the logic of his arguments, his wonderful personality, and most of all, his spotless life and character. It was the combination of heart and intellect that made Swamiji the power that he was.

His mission to the West, I take it, was to give to the Christians a higher interpretation of their own scriptures; to give unbelievers a sound foundation for serious investigation; to guide the scientific mind into channels of higher research; to point out to western nations the danger of a materialistic civilization; and to show to all men and women the way to realise their own divinity.

And this he did by placing before us and by explaining to us the treasures of the Vedas.

In fulfilling his mission Swami Vivekananda has placed all western nations under eternal obligations to India.

SWAMIJI AND THE WEST

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA

It all began with a vision which Shri Ramakrishna had during his life time. One day he saw that in the days to come many white-complexioned devotees would also be coming for his grace. In the year 1886, just before he passed away, he wrote in a small piece of paper that Naren will teach the world and that he would go to a distant place and roar like a lion. None could believe the implication of this prophecy then.

When Shri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886, the young boys who had gathered round him at Cossipore and trained by him

to lead the monastic life, felt a sense of desolation. The last period of excruciating pain of cancer that their master suffered from, left an impression on the minds of many. But along with their service to the master, the young men were also doing intense sadhana under the guidance and inspiration of Shri Ramakrishna who directed them to live together even after his death. Narendranath, who wanted to be immersed in the bliss of nirvikalpa samadhi, was asked by the master to lead and look after this group and to keep them together.

In the life of Swami Vivekananda three formative influences worked ; first, his acquaintance with the scriptures of India and the philosophy of the West ; second, his intimate knowledge of his own motherland, India ; third, his spiritual training under the guidance of his guru, Shri Ramakrishna.

Despite his first-hand knowledge of the Western philosophy and Eastern scriptures, the young Naren remained unsatisfied. He wanted to see the verification of these truths mentioned in the scriptures. In Shri Ramakrishna he found a fulfilment of these very truths. Nay, he found these verities in Shri Ramakrishna's life of which the scriptures were but imperfect expressions. Vivekananda saw the swing of Shri Ramakrishna's mind from a common life to the higher regions of spiritual realisation. Out of infinite bounty of his heart, the master gave this knowledge gathered in the superconscious state, for the good of mankind.

In Shri Ramakrishna's life and teachings he found the key with which to unravel the mysteries of life. The teachings of his master made him convinced of the global mission for which his master was born in this age of materialism, reason, and doubt.

But only the knowledge of his master was not enough. Vivekananda wanted to see with his own eyes his own country, the country which was once so great in spiritual vision and material prosperity, and which was now degraded and decadent. He moved from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin meeting maharajas, commoners, and even the beggars and pariahs. This great journey of India made him realise that the nation was not merely a geogrphical entity. Although she was living in the slumber of age-old political slavery, India was, to his vision, a gigantic spiritual organism with an immense potentiality which needed conflagration. He felt himself the harbinger of the heavenly fire to bring new life to his moribund motherland. With a deep confidence he said that India is not old and effete but young and vigorous, spiritually. Despite this knowledge, the immense poverty all over the vast sub-continent pained him. He saw the Indian people passing their days in utter humiliation under the foreign rule. The entire nation was living apparently a lethargic and disinterested existence. India, the great nation, was virtually sleeping like a huge pre-historic leviathan. With a prophetic passion he took it upon his mighty shoulders to rejuvenate India and assure her great role as the spiritual teacher and saviour of the growingly materialistic world.

Sitting on the last rock of Kanyakumari, he hit upon a plan. It was to carry the spiritual knowledge of India to the West and get some help from the West in order to set up some institutions to feed the hungry, teeming millions of his motherland. He had already heard about the Parliament of Religions to be held in 1893 in Chicago. Many who knew him asked him to go there but he was not sure about what course to be taken. During these days of alternating hope and doubt, one night he dreamt that Shri Ramakrishna was walking through the ocean and asking him to follow him. Still doubting and unsatisfied, he wrote to Holy Mother seeking her blessings for this great journey. The blessings came and he finally felt determined to go. In the presence of

his Madras devotees and others, on 31st May, 1893, Vivekananda sailed alone for the West. He never dreamt of the great destiny that was waiting for him. Vivekananda's disciples were devoted to him and genuine in their service to the master, but they too were inexperienced about the mundane matters which a foreign trip needed for a penniless wandering monk like their master, Vivekananda.

Via Vancouver, he arrived at Chicago. He came two months earlier. There was nothing for him to do. Neither he had the money to maintain himself for these days. America does not allow monks to beg. After trials and tribulations, he finally reached the historic dais of the Parliament of Religions. After that, history was made. Many religious lectures were delivered by the representatives of the various religions on the very first day. Many speeches were highly intellectual and well-written. Many speakers exhibited oratorical skills. But when the unknown monk Swami Vivekananda stood up and just spoke the first five words: "Sisters and Brothers of America"—thundering applause from seven thousand ladies and gentlemen, the most selected gathering of the American continent, thrilled the hall and the speaker himself.

What was the newness in these five words ? It expressed the true spirit and the essence of the Parliament. Vivekananda knew that he was only the carrier of the message of his master, and all that fell from his lips for the rest of the Parliament were the teachings of his master. But Vivekananda never mentioned his master's name fearing that they would not be able to recognise the greatness of the unlettered man of God. Yet it is his master's voice which rang in thundering cadence through the lips of this disciple. The Parliament over, Vivekananda became a celebrity in the American subcontinent.

Years of activity then followed in America and a short period of Vedantic preaching in Europe. Those were the years of a man of God traversing through the great country of USA where he implanted the seed of Vedanta philosophy, preaching everywhere the essential divinity innate in every human being, the essential unity of all religions, and the fundamental unity of existence. When the preaching got intensified and people began to flock around him, Vivekananda started his first centre in New York.

In February 1896 he wrote, "I have succeeded now in rousing the very heart of the American civilisation, New York, but it has been a terrific struggle." This preaching was, indeed, a terrific struggle which took away years of life from him. In the November of the same year, he confided to someone, "I had to work till I am at death's door, and had to spend nearly the whole of that energy in America...." He knew that he was carrying to the West the life-giving message of Vedanta, the message of his master for their own good. He had no fear to speak out the truth about the essential divinity of all souls, and he gave this message with intense sacrifice and love for his own Western brothers and sisters. "I had a message from India to the West," he wrote a month before his death, "and boldly I gave it to the American and English peoples." To the Westerners he proved that the most transcendental ideas can be made practical in real life and can be realised even by the common masses. *Boston Evening Transcript* of March 30, 1896 wrote, "In preaching the divinity of man he inculcates a spirit of strength into us which will have none of those barriers between life and actual realisation of the sublime that, to ordinary man, appears as insurmountable." In January of the same year *New York Herald* admitted, "Sufficient success has attended the efforts of Swami Vivekananda."

With his spine-breaking labour when he succeeded to draw the respect of many emi-

nent intellectuals, preachers, and seekers of God, Swamiji decided to create a band of spiritually enlightened souls from the Westerners. This he accomplised in his six weeks of sublime ministration in the Thousand Island Park in 1896.

Ninety years have passed after Vivekananda's preaching in the West. Swamiji passed away in 1902. But the power of his words which even when couched in cold print sends an electric shock to persons like Romain Rolland, is inspiring thousands today in the West. His thoughts are still working and his influence is expanding. Today there are 12 Vedanta Centres laid and run by the monks of Vivekananda in USA. It is not the number of centres which is important. It is the deep but steady penetration of Vedanta philosophy as preached and practised by Swamiji, that we see more and more as the years roll on. Swamiji said, "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God."

Last year in 1988, I chanced to visit many Vedanta centres of our Order in USA. This was my second trip to the great continent. Vedanta centres at Seattle and St. Louis invited me for their golden jubilee celebrations. On 11th April I started from Calcutta. After visiting Delhi, London, Seattle, Portland, Berkeley, Sacramento, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Trabuco, Chicago, New York, Boston, Toronto in Canada (private centere), Seattle and London, I came back to Delhi on 22nd July.

A representative of the '*Prabuddha Bharata*' requested to give my impressions of this visit. I find our centres are more developed than earlier. More people are coming. They are interested in something which their material prosperity and worldly enjoyments could not vouchsafe to have. There is a great search for inner life in them. It should be remembered that 15 Vedanta centres run by the monks of Vivekananda in the West are very few compared to the vast spiritual need of the West. Because of the shortage of monks, we could not send more of them to the West. I wish that the spiritual-minded young Indians would join the Order in future in large numbers and help us spread more the message of Shri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the West.

Swami Vivekananda's message is the message of practical Vedanta. He preached that the One and the many are the same. That is why the workshop and the study, the farmyard and the field, are equally fit places of the meeting of God and man, as are the cells of the hermit and the doors of the temple. But unfortunately in the name of preaching spirituality many people today are coming to the West for selling religion and spirituality. In our centres I found that really sincere and pure souls are coming and receiving from our Swamis the pure, life-giving water, the age-old spiritual teachings of Vedanta for quenching their parched hearts.

The progress is slow. But I do not think that the effect of the preachings of Swami Vivekananda will go in vain. He came not to ask money but to give spirituality 'freely' and he gave his best years of life for the West. That first impact of Vivekananda's preaching is still there. It flows like a rivulet meandering sometimes visibly, sometimes in subterranean ways. But I am confident that the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is spreading and will spread more and more in the days to come, thus proving true the words of Arnold J. Toynbee who said,

"Shri Ramakrishna was born and brought up in a village in Bengal. He spent most of his life in a temple on the bank of the Ganges, only few miles away from Calcutta. Outwardly his life might seem uneventful. Yet in his own field, the field of religion, his life was more active and more effective

than the lives of his contemporaries, Indian and English, who were building the framework of modern India in Shri Ramakrishna's life time.

Perhaps Shri Ramakrishna's life was even more modern than theirs in the sense that his work may have a still greater future than theirs."

HAIL, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA!

(*New York World*, February 3, 1895)

A New Finding

GARGI

In volume three of the six-volume series *Swami Vivekananda in the West* it is said, "As far as be determined, the New York newspapers had not concerned themselves with Swamiji's stay (in the city in the early part of 1895). Cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and churning with people and ideas of all sorts, the city accepted him without fanfare or blazing headlines."[1] This turns out to be only partly true. Yes, New York accepted Swamiji without the blazing headlines that had greeted him wherever he went in the Midwest; but during that first season of his New York work the newspapers did not ignore him. Indeed, shortly after he had settled down in New York for the quiet, concentrated work of teaching Vedanta—primarily by holding classes in his own quarters—the *New York World* greeted him with an excellent article, which appeared on Sunday, February 3, 1895. This important and welcoming announcement of Swamiji's presence in New York, has recently been unearthed by Ray and Wanda Ellis of St. Louis, Missouri—two indefatigable devotees, who have been searching for (and finding) overlooked footprints of Swamiji's trail through America.

Graciously, the Ellises have sent me their discoveries, and since this *World* report is, I think, of special interest to those of Swamiji's followers who never get enough of hearing about the impression he made upon Americans as he strode through their land, I am presenting it here as a kind of appendix to volume three of *Swami Vivekananda in the West—The World Teacher*, Part one.

To me, one of the things that makes this article of particular interest is the remark of its author to the effect that Swamiji had good manners—an observation one would make, one thinks, only about a child or an alien from outer space. And, to be sure, in the 1890s most Americans viewed Swamiji as the latter type of phenomenon. India was as strange as a planet of some other star. The discoveries that this Hindu, this alien being, spoke fluent English, that he was learned, intelligent, and witty, that he was *well-mannered*—such discoveries were startling and fascinating. They made headlines.

But I have wondered if there was not some quality about Swamiji's courtesy, superb though it was, that made it particularly remarkable to our reporter—something over and above the newsworthy fact that this extraterrestrial was a gentleman. Was there perhaps some shining quality about his courtesy that could not be accounted for merely by "elegant breeding"?

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1. Marie Louise Burke, *The World Teacher, Part One*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), pp. 315-16.

In a sense, all courtesy shines, for, as everybody knows, it is based on consideration for others, on "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you." It springs from empathy with others, and that is indeed a shining thing. But did not the shine of Swamiji's manner have a different quality and a greater magnitude about it than that of the most exquisite of ordinary human courtesy? Acting as he did at all times from an awareness of the divinity of every man, woman, and child—of every living being—did he not move and speak as one would in a temple where the Deity is awake? Was not his courtesy an act of reverence? One would say yes; to him the universe was a temple and every being in it was the object of his worship. Moreover, he himself lived so close to God that he was continually in what a Christian might call a "state of grace"—and this in the most profound sense of the term. He was grace itself. His whole being was grace-full. His voice was music; his words poetry to those who listened; his movements flowed like the movements of a dance; his thought was instinct with truth. How many of those who knew him remarked on this quality of *gracefulness* that characterised him! There was nothing harsh about him, nothing awkward, nothing out of place, nothing rude. True, Swamiji was sometimes rough—as one is when one shakes another person who is thrashing about in sleep, having some horrendous nightmare. He shook dreaming people without too politeness, wanting only to bring them out of their private horror. But he was also (by the same token) the gentlest of the gentle. He tempered his every act to another's need.

One might see this trait as "elegant breeding" as did the writer of the following article, or one might know it to stem from the consciousness of Oneness, where Swamiji dwelt. Indeed, perhaps one could say that true "good manners" (as distinct from the shifting winds of custom and etiquette, which he often scorned) are based less on doing good unto others than on a state of mind in which one sees no "self" and no "others", we all, consciously or unconsciously, aspire to and adore.

In any case, in the following article we glimpse Swamiji as he was seen by someone back in 1895. One suspects that our reporter was amazed not only that this alien being was an exquisitely cultured, well-bred gentleman, but that his courtesy had an unaccustomed, unearthly luster about it—a shine that effortlessly bridged the light-years between two worlds.

Well, here is the *New York World* article of February 3, 1895:

HAIL, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

A High-Caste Brahmin from India Is the Latest Social Fad.

PREACHING THE "HIGHER THOUGHT"

Picturesque, Interesting, Cultured and Well Bred, and Has Fascinating Liquid Eyes.

The Swami Vivekananda is in town. Perhaps you know that in Hindu language Swami means master, or rabbi, and that it is pronounced like Suwamee in the old song with an m substituted for an n. The rest of the Swami's name, as near as English-speaking Occidentals can come to it. begins with wevee, then runs into cannon, and winds up with thuh like the article the before a consonant.

Swamee Weveecannontha was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions in the World's Fair, sent to represent the religion of the Hindus. He has remained here doing missionary work in response to invitations by prominent members of the "higher thought" movement in this conutry. They are greatly impressed by his teachings.

What is he like? An exceedingly handsome, rather stockily built young man of thirty, or

thereabouts, very dark skinned, with the large black, liquid eyes that the matinee girl raves over as "splendid," who goes about in a long dark orange-red coat, with a sash about the waist. Out of doors and in all public places, as at the theatre, which he sometimes attends, the Swami's curling dark hair is surrounded by a wonderfully complicated turban.

Who is he? The son of one of the first families in Bengal, born a Brahmin of the highest caste and grew up with the name Narendra Nath Dutta. He was educated at the Calcutta University and elsewhere for the law.

At twenty his interest in the holy personages among his people led him to listen to Ram Krishna Deb, whom the Hindus worship as an incarnation of God. Vivekananda became one of his disciples, left his family and took the vows of chastity and poverty.

His master, who departed this life in 1886 (a Brahmin by caste), was an orthodox Hindu, a believer in reincarnation, but an eclectic; an advocate of the doctrines of the Vedas, but accepting all doctrines; worshipping all the great teachers of the past; an idolator, but a believer in one infinite deity. Swami Vivekananda follows him.

His missionary efforts here are to urge that the fundamental truths of all religions are in harmony. He wishes our missionaries to India would stop preaching dogmas and creeds. His idea of worship is transcendental insight.

Last Sunday afternoon he addressed a number of socially prominent people in the drawing rooms of a Gramercy Park residence, and during the week he graciously received a World reporter.

He wishes to raise money here to use in establishing a training-school for young men and women in his own country who desire to become teachers. But he is not begging and is making no effort to secure money. Several people, moved by his eloquence, have offered him gifts, but these he refuses, his views not permitting him to hold or collect money. Subscriptions for the proposed training-school, however, may be forwarded through the Swami direct to India.

The impurity of the religions of India is a topic that moves the Swami to most impressive eloquence. He says, "Why do you judge our people or religion by the lowest element? You in America would not wish to be judged by the ignorant, low people among you. In Southern India there are worshippers of a negative system of religion, but in Northern India the religion is the highest spirituality. The immoralities in the temples, of which dreadful stories reach your ears, are the orgies of a tribe in Southern India who are not true Indians and by whom we feel it injustice to be measured."

In the Swami's religion the mother is worshipped as the incarnation of the female attributes of the divine nature. Even when a man becomes a monk his mother's wishes continue supreme, and whatever she commands him he is bound to obey. "The entire literature of India may be searched," says the Swami, "for an unchaste heroine, and in vain. Chastity in woman is a part of the religion of the people," and motherhood is raised by them to an exalted and ideally beautiful place.

The Swami's master believed that women and money are the chief sources of trouble in the world, and he it was who insisted that the man who would teach his fellow-beings to attain to purer lives must look upon every woman, young or old, as his mother, and treat her as such. He also must trust to each day to supply the material needs of that day in food.

"In my country," says the Swami, "the orange-red dress is looked upon by all the people as the badge of poverty, calling for generosity, and the presentation at any door of the tin cup carried by a monk will bring a ready offering of food that suffices for his needs till he is again hungry."

He would like to see some of the Western energy and enterprise grafted upon the Eastern temperament and life, and believes that we should be benefited if we imbibed some of the Eastern calm and poise.

The Swami is the personification of elegant breeding. His manner is exquisitely polished, and his voice one that delights the sensitive ear. His mind moves quickly and its resources seem unlimited. He has tact, policy, and wisdom, and does not commit himself upon any topic of which he does not feel himself to be the master.

"Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu?" he asks, and himself answers, "God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid," he continues, and goes on to say that each one must assimilate everything that will contribute to his growth, but must develop according to his own individuality.

"One thing I must tell you," says the Swami. "Idolatry in India does not mean anything horrible.

It is not the mother of fallen women. On the other hand, it is the attempt of undeveloped minds to grasp high spiritual truths. The Hindus have their faults, but mark this, they are always punishing their own bodies, and never (tend) towards cutting the throats of their neighbors. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of inquisition. And even this cannot be laid at the door of religion any more than the burning of witches can be laid at the door of Christianity.

The Swami's voice in speaking English is scarcely less musical than when he is chanting some of the tenets of his religion in old Sanscrit (sic), and far from looking the austere ascetic, his physique inclines more towards that of the late Phillips Brooks. He smiles frequently when he is speaking, in a delightfully frank and magnetic fashion.

One of the most spacious Fifth avenue mansions has been put at the disposal of the ladies who wish to hear the Swami speak.

One might add to the above article a note or two. First, the Gramercy Park residence in whose drawing rooms Swamiji spoke on the Sunday of January 27 (see paragraph 8) was almost certainly the apartment of Miss Emma Thursby, the singer. Swamiji's talk there was one of the first parlour lectures he gave in New York City. Those same drawing rooms may also (to the dismay of Mrs. Ole Bull) have been the scene of a heated argument between Swamiji and a Presbyterian minister.[2]

Second, the "spacious Fifth avenue mansion" mentioned in the last paragraph was very likely the residence of the Anzi Lorenzi Barbers at 871 Fifth Avenue, where Swamiji would give two lectures and possibly hold several classes in February and March of 1895.[3]

Thus, on the eve of his teaching work in America, was Swami Vivekananda introduced to the New York public. Strangely, neither the schedule of his classes nor the address of his quarters where he had started holding them was given in this article. But people would find him out, and soon his modest rooms at 54 West Thirty-third Street would be crowded to overflowing as he poured out the great message he had for the West, indeed for all mankind.

2. Ibid., pp. 27, 34-35.
3. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

NEED OF VIVEKANANDA TODAY

DR. V.K.R.V. RAO

I do want to remind the participants of the Seminar that the essence of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement can be summed up, firstly as positive secularism, secondly as patriotism, and thirdly as the service to Daridra-narayana as a worship of God. I think these indeed are the basic truths. But these are truths we have completely forgotten in these days of mercenary politics. I would like to read out one or two passages to illustrate to you in a graphic language the topic of positive secularism, something which has not been quoted so far in this seminar. I think if we want secularism, we must get rid of all our mental reservations and forget the facts that we are Hindus or Muslims or Christians or Buddhists or Sikhs or anything else. If we think of ourselves primarily as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, we are bound to take a parochial view—whether we like it or not. And I think this is the great thing about Swami Vivekananda. I would not even call him a Hindu monk. He was much more than a

Hindu. I think this is something which is got to be realised and, I hope, should be repeated time and again, and from the house-tops not only by the lay men but also by all the monks of the Mission. I quote what Swami Vivekananda himself said. He said: "I believe in acceptance. I accept all the religions that were in the past and worship them all. I worship God in every one of them, in whatever form they worship him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedans, I shall enter the Christian church and kneel before the crucifix. I shall enter the Buddhistic temple. I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in his law. I shall go to the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu and try to see the light which enlightens the heart of everyone. Not only I shall do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. If God's first book is finished next one opens up. Thus continuous revelation is going on. It is a marvellous book—these spiritual revelations of the world—the Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books are so many pages and infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all. At this time of the present day we open ourselves to infinite future. I take in all that have been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart to all that will come in the future. Salutations to all Prophets of the past, to all the great men of the present and to all that will come in future." These are the words which Swamiji himself spoke and these are the words which should govern the policy of all of us whether we are lay men or monks, and who dare to call ourselves as the propagators of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. The only glorification that we can give Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is the extent to which we can spread their message, the extent to which this message can stimulate the thinking and hearts of people who listen to them, and the extent to which action programme will follow on receipt of this message. The second thing that I want to emphasise is—what we should carry back with us. I think it is Swami Vivekananda's love of the country, the identification of the country with the people of the country, the identfication of the country with all parts of the country. One small incident that moved me very much was when somebody asked him when he came back from the West, "Swami, how do you feel about India after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West?" The Swami replied—and I love these words—"India, I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha." Now this is India. Is it not something to be proud of? India consists of Indian people. Indian people consist of all kinds of people—religious, irreligious, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Atheists. India means the people of India.

Then comes the third part of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda message.

It is a privilege to serve. I am proud of telling my young colleagues and friends that India is a very rich country. It has got such a wealth of opportunities to serve, much more than any other country that I know—not in any one field, but almost in every field, every walk of life. We are a privileged people, because we have got so many opportunities to serve the poor, the down-trodden, the Daridra-narayanas, the handicapped, the illiterate, etc., etc. In that we enjoy that privilege of serving and worshipping God. This you cannot escape. If you want Swami Vivekananda's movement to influence you, you can't escape the call of religion. Whether you call it Advaita or Dvaita, it makes no difference. You can't escape the call of religion, the identity of God with man and worship of God in the form of man, man who is in need. And to fulfil those

needs is the privilege that is conferred on those who are in a position to do that. These are the things and there are many more things one can say about Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement and the message of Vivekananda. I won't call it an ideology. In fact I would deprecate the use of the word ideology in connection with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. Because ideology means the slogans and the names of various political parties, and all sorts of things. Ideology means today political creed. Now this call of religion by Swamiji is something which goes beyond all ideology. There is nothing to prevent any political party accepting these three tenets of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movements. And I would like to emphasise that Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement is above all parties and it is for all parties. We are prepared to throw open the doors to all political parties as far as these ideas are concerned.

I think, the wisest thing Swami Vivekananda did was not to enter into any party politics. The fact that he inspired Revolutionaries, that he inspired National Independence Movement, is all right. But I think far more important are the people. What we want to do is spiritualise politics. We can spiritualise politics by not taking part in it. We can spiritualise politics by seeing to it that the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda reaches to all political parties and the youngsters in political parties. You can belong to any political party. But you have got to observe the three things—positive secularism, intense patriotism and the service of the handicapped, the Daridra-narayana as a privilege to serve God, if you believe in God. If you don't believe in God, you can treat it as a privilege to serve whatever social ideal you may have for social service. Ramakrishna Mission does not have unlimited number of members; but they have a very important role. That is what I call the role of expounding Jnana contained in the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. If you take Vivekananda himself, he was a unique person. He followed the Jnana marga. Nobody expounded the ideas of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the implications of his ideas more wonderfully, and more authoritatively and more clearly than what Swami Vivekananda did. Vivekananda was a Jnani. He followed the path of Jnana. He was also a Karma Yogi. Shri Ramakrishna was apparently seen more as a Bhakti Yogi and a Jnana Yogi. But Vivekananda was a Karma Yogi. He did not merely expound knowledge. He went about working actively and even killing himself in the process at the early age of 39 and a few months. He was a Karma Yogi, and most of all he was a Bhakti Yogi, because he was full of emotion all the time. You read any book of Vivekananda, you will find sooner or later that the heart speaks out. Even in his most intellectual arguments, you will find the heart speaks out. He was a combination of Jnana Yogi, Karma Yogi, and Bhakti Yogi.

I think the primary function of the Ramakrishna Mission and the monks is spiritual education, to educate the people in the ideas of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda or what we call the tenets of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. And I would only like to say with great humility, because I have not undergone the sacrifices which the monks have undergone in their personal life in order to be a monk and live as a monk, but I would suggest that the education that they give to people, is their major job. They cannot do all the social work that can be done by some industrial organisations which have got 50 crores (of rupees) at their disposal. Nor can they do all the social work that can be done by the Government with 5,000 crores or 20,000 crores (of rupees) for this programme or that programme. Their major

excellence, their major superiority is imparting of knowledge and educating the people, not only the people in the towns, not only the elite but educating the masses, educating the ignorant people, educating the village people, in the real and true tenets of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement which means, if I may be pardoned in making this suggestion, the Practical Vedanta, not the Upanishadic Vedanta which is very subtle, very intellectually satisfying, which is overpowering in tackling the questions which are being raised by the people who have come to the Seminar.

Vivekananda coined the word "Practical Vedanta". He tried to bring Vedantic ideas into touch with social realities. I think this is the major task now. But then to expect the Mission to do all these social works, to open all schools and colleges in this country, to teach all the illiterate people which the Government can do or the large number of voluntary organisations can do, is too much. But I would also say that along with Jnana, the academic knowledge, educate the people in Practical Vedanta. They should set some examples, as they are doing already in Calcutta, Bangalore, and other major cities of India. Everywhere they are doing some educational work as also relief work in famines, floods and so on.

In addition to that, they also have an important role for practice of Bhakti Yoga; and Bhakti Yoga, according to Vivekananda, means the love of God which means love of man, and love of man means love of the handicapped, the poor, the oppressed and the suppressed. So, Bhakti and Jnana, I would say, are the major functions, and these are the functions which you and I cannot perform; because to perform this requires austerities, a way of life and style of living which is not possible for grihasthas who are married, who have children, have jobs, who are fighting for this, and that, and who are attached to so many things in life. They cannot even preach these great ideas, excepting to some extent the professors who are giving some academic lectures. But when it comes to the question of conveying the message, carrying it into the hearts and minds of vast masses of people, the only persons who can do it, in my opinion, are the monks, people whose sole purpose in life is to serve God, and to spread knowledge about how to serve.

I would suggest when next time a Seminar is organised they may arrange one or two lectures which will be delivered by some authoritative person from the Ramakrishna Mission on what is Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideology in theoretical and practical terms. It will come with authority from them because they are the authority to expound it. It will help and support the efforts of all lay people like our friends here—myself and others. The question was also raised in Hyderabad why are the Swamis just sitting silent, why are they not speaking. They can speak quite a lot. They are silent because they have chosen to be silent. They don't want anybody to think that this is a Ramakrishna-Vivekananda imperialist venture. It is we who are lay men, who are moved by the ideas of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, who are trying to organise these things. I think it is the starting. It is going to be a big movement. It is the right time. You see, when a nation almost goes downhill, when it almost reaches to the brink of the precipice or lowest depths, either it gets restored or it dies. And this country cannot die and has not died. Though many other civilizations, culture, and countries have died, we have not. This country can never die. If we are not to die, we are not going to live in a state of mere death. But one has to come to a state of near death in order to wake up. That kind of shock-treatment is coming to our country everyday in the last few years. Almost everybody who reads in the newspaper as to what is hap-

pening in India, is in despair. Nobody knows what is to be done. Everybody feels that things are going out of hand and it is almost what is called a suicide wish in the minds of many people who feel 'let us die—nothing can be done about it—or let us accept.' It means to accept death instead of fighting it. Therefore I say that this is the appropriate time for the power and the words of Vivekananda inspired by Shri Ramakrishna, to come into the picture. Now is the most appropriate time that has been selected for the inauguration and for the launching of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. But it should not stop with only these national Seminars, as was pointed out. I think they have to be pursued in colleges. I think there are 5000 to 6000 colleges in India and there are 120 affiliated universities. I would rather leave the universities alone. They are big institutions. Colleges are small institutions and personal institutions. They can be tackled easily than big universities which are much more politically constituted than colleges. I think one of the objectives of the movement should be to organise a Seminar in every college with a number of Principals and college teachers who have come here and are interested, and taking part in the discussions. I think there should be some kind of encouragement given to them, some kind of guidelines, topics, subjects, literature, and I think holding of Seminars should be followed up by setting up of what I shall call Vivekananda service centres, Vivekananda Societies, or Vivekananda Clubs, or whatever you may like to call, but let us somehow bring in the name of Vivekananda. He is above all religions, above all communities, above all petty things and above all things that divide. He unifies. He does not divide. So, in the name of Vivekananda, start social service clubs, start other educational clubs, start handicapped helping clubs, start rural development clubs, start slum improvement clubs, start any clubs that you like—something that involves doing something which is other than doing something for our own self. I would like to suggest to the younger friends that they need not bother the monks. Then you may ask, "Why are you bringing in Vivekananda? Vivekananda was a monk. These are all monks. Why do you bring his name? Why don't you bring somebody else, you may say?" We don't mind if you bring in anybody you like. We are concerned, we are inspired, we are stimulated by the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and we would like to do in his name. So I should like thousands of clubs to be started in the name of Vivekananda all over the country. Not only in colleges but in High Schools, also in Women's organisations, amongst housewives, professional working women, industrial workers, rural workers. Wherever we can find a group of 10, 20 or 30 people, start a Vivekananda Club. Only they should meet once in a week, or a fortnight—depending on the time at their disposal. They should discuss, argue, amongst themselves, as to what they who believe in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, can do. What should the colleges do? The college authorities can give these clubs some free literature. Let them educate themselves. Let them think themselves. Let them understand. Let them do something to follow in the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

Another question I want to answer is, "Was Vivekananda a revivalist?" Many people have asked this question. One way of destroying a man is to call him a reactionary. Revivalist always means one who revives something which is very old, not only something which is very old, but something which is very bad. A revivalist means a man who brings back something which is very old in its conception without any discrimination, without any change, without any proper cleaning. That is called reviva-

lism. We are not revivalists and Swami Vivekananda was not a revivalist. He was, in fact, a revolutionary and not a revivalist. As a revolutionary he only sought to get from the past such strength that gave good ideas and good motivations. We are told that the strength of the Cambridge University is its 500 year old colleges. What is the strength of India ? It is her 5000 year old civilization. Time, ancient history, long life—this is a tremendous power. Many think that we should entirely destroy the past and rebuild. We cannot do it. Stalin had to go back to Czarist Russia and bring Peter the Great back to win the war against Nazi Germany. We cannot ignore the past. We cannot forget the past. What we can do is that we can discriminate. We need not take the entire past as it is. We can take from the past, what is good and life-giving, and we can discard from the past what is untimely and not relevant. But we can take from the past what is eternal, what is permanent, and what is also relevant. And when we do that and make it a point in current year's programme and future aspirations, it gathers much more strength. That was Vivekananda's revivalism. No man has more harshly condemned the defects of our society which are still happening in India. The language used by him was harsher than any political radical has used. But that did not make him curse his country. That did not make him destroy everything. He said that this national ship has been carrying us for the last 3000 years. Some leakages have sprung in the ship. Let us plug them. Let us plug them with our mind. Very significant phrase "Let us plug them with our mind." Let us plug them with our heart. We will not discard it. We will not malign it. In other words, we will only accept the good from the past.

This is the hope, the message that we get in these national Seminars on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE OF A COMPREHENSIVE SPIRITUALITY

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

Vedanta in its application to daily life, individual and collective, forms one of the many contributions of Swami Vivekananda. The spiritual message of Vedanta was interpreted for centuries as relevant only for those who have renounced the struggles of mundane life ; and to those engaged in that mundane struggle, religion was presented, in all religions, as a static piety or a piety-fringed worldliness. Such piety can often co-exist with any amount of immorality, wickedness, intolerance, and violence. Thus there was a wide gulf between life and religion. The same religious devotee who will weep before his God in temple, church, mosque, or gurudwara will not hesitate to do harm to others, or exploit them, in the field of daily life. When questioned, the usual answer is: we are after all *samsaris*, worldly people ; we are not saints!

Both life and religion, and all interhuman relationships, have suffered grievously from this separation. Life became self-centred and bereft of humanist values, and religion became a static piety of do's and don'ts. Such an idea of religion became less and less appealing to increasing numbers of people, as well as utterly irrelevant, in the modern age.

Swami Vivekananda has well described this deplorable state of so high a science as the science of spirituality which deals with the super-sensory (not super-natural) dimension of human life, and has also expounded that science, and the philosophy that synthesises life at the sensory and super-sensory levels in a unifying vision. Says he in one of his letters written from New York in March 1895:

'My master (Shri Ramakrishna) used to say that these names as, Hindu, Christian, etc., stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers, and now stand as baneful influences, under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed.'[1]

Again writing to Sister Nivedita from London in June 1896, he says:

'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

'This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether man or woman, and I pity more the oppressors.

'One idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by *ignorance* and nothing else. Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law: it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.'[2]

The great sages of India had developed the philosophy of the Upanishads, known as Vedanta, as *the science of human possibilities*; they knew the various urges and needs of man, sensory as well as super-sensory, and proved for them in their scheme of life through the two-fold values of *abhyudaya* and *nihshreyasa*—individual and social welfare, on the one hand, and spiritual emancipation, on the other. Vedanta is pervaded by a deep passion for truth and a deeper passion for human happiness and welfare; it does not deal with men as cut up into tribes, creeds, races and nations; it takes man as man gently by the hand, in his primitive state of childish exuberance, and leads him, through the delights and restraints of culture and civilisation, to the peace and fullness of perfection. It upholds the spiritual freedom of every man, woman, and tolerance and gentleness as its motto. The Advaitic vision of Vedanta is called by Gaudapada, the teacher of Shankaracharya's teacher Govindapada, as *Asparsha-yoga*, the yoga of non-separateness, the scope of which Gaudapada expounds thus:

Asparsha yogo vai nama
Sarva-sattva sukho hitah;
Avivado aviruddhascha
deshitah tam namamyaham—

'I salute this well-known yoga of non-separateness, which strives for the happiness and welfare of all beings and is free from all strife and contradiction.'[3]

It was this comprehensive philosophy of Vedanta that found living expression, with all its force and charm, in our time, in the lives and teachings of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They represent the Vedantic passion for total human welfare in all its phases, material and moral, cultural and spiritual.

The greatest teaching of Vedanta, the central teaching of this science of human possibilities, is summed up by Swami Vivekananda in a compressed utterance:

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, sixth edition), Vol. VI, pp. 303.
2. Ibid., Vol. VII, pp. 489.
3. *Mandukya Upanishad Karika*

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external (through the physical sciences and social sciences) and internal (through morality, art, and religion). Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'[4]

Herein we find his clarion call to make Vedanta practical; if we are all essentially divine, and basically one with each other in that innate divine dimension, we have to manifest or unfold that divinity, in the context of our life, work, and inter-human relations. What a great purpose Vedanta thus keeps before human life! And how rich and lofty human life becomes when yoked to such a purpose! All ethical and moral values, the spirit of service and dedication, strength and fearlessness, and all work-efficiency, appear in man as a by-product of this manifestation of his or her innate divinity. When we begin to manifest our innate divinity, we begin to grow spiritually; we then also begin to transcend our separatist self which is the focus of tension, peacelessness, violence, crime, and exploitation. As the *Isha Upanishad* proclaimed it: 'Whoever sees the One Self in all beings and all beings in the One Self, cannot hate anyone.' This vision of spiritual unity bridges the gulf between sect and sect, and religion and religion, between man's external life and his internal life, between secular and the sacred, and action and contemplation. This many-sided expression, this comprehensiveness of Vedantic spirituality had earlier been expounded by Shri Krishna in the Gita; but it had not been grasped and implemented by our people. But this time it comes to us with a new authenticity and force through Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Shri Ramakrishna expresses this Advaitic vision in a simple sentence as 'seeing God with eyes closed (in meditation) and with eyes open (while in action)'. Sister Nivedita brings out the practical implications of Swami Vivekananda's exposition of this Advaitic vision in two famous passages of her Introduction to the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,

It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

'This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing, Jnana and Bhakti. To him, the worship, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.'[5]

Again: 'All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction:

"Art, science, and religion", he said once, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita." '[6]

Writing to an Indian disciple from America in February 1896, Vivekananda expounded the first of his two life objectives thus:

'To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer startling psychology, a religion

4. *The Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 124.

5. Ibid., Vol. I (Our Master and His Message), p. xv.

6. Ibid., p. xvi.

which shall be easy, simple, popular and, at the same time, meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogiism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.'[7]

On his second life objective, he wrote from America in January 1894 thus:

'My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation will be done by nature according to her laws.'[8]

Swamiji felt it deeply as a blot on India that, while her people *talked* high Advaita Vedanta, their daily life and human interactions in society proceeded from narrow and self-centred attitudes, and bore no impress of this high philosophy and spirituality; and he summoned our people, in his Lahore lecture on Vedanta in 1897, *to wipe off this blot*! He showed how Vedanta can help us to transform what we usually call worldly or secular activities into spiritual ones—activities in the various fields such as secular education, management, industry, business, industrial labour, work of the housewife, farming, art, shoe-making, weaving, politics, administration. Spirituality is everyone's birthright, says Vedanta. To go here and there for spirituality is like proposing to go here and there for breathing! In some of his lectures, Vivekananda has indicated how spirituality can be comprehensive of all life and work. One of his five famous lectures, delivered in Madras in 1897 on his return from the West, has this very title: *Vedanta and Its Application to Indian Life*. There he says:

'These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be....If the fisherman thinks he is the Spirit (the Atman), he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student; if the lawyer thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on....If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say: "I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you." And that is what we want; no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all. Let everyone be taught that the Divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation.'[9]

In the light of this Vedantic teaching of the innate divinity of one and all, and man's nature-given organic capacity to realise it in life, faith in oneself, *Atma-Shraddha*, ranks as the foremost virtue to be cultivated by man. One who has no faith in oneself cannot have faith in others. Tracing the downfall of India to the continuing sapping of this faith in themselves in our people, through a wrong understanding of religion, and also to the sad neglect, by our people, of their physical body, Vivekananda said:

'What we want is this *Shraddha*. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and that is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between man and man is this *Shraddha* and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this *Shraddha*. My Master used to say: he who thinks himself weak will become weak, and that is true. This *Shraddha* must enter into you. Whatever of material power you see manifested by the Western races is the

7. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 104.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. Ibid., Vol. III. 9th edition, pp. 245-46.

outcome of this *Shraddha*, because they believe in their muscles, and if you believe in your Spirit, how much more will it work! Believe in that infinite soul, the infinite power, which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Atman, which nothing can destroy, in it is infinite power, only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy. Whether dualistic, qualified monistic, or monistic, they all firmly believe that everything is in the soul itself. Therefore, this *Shraddha* is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves; and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this *Shraddha*, and everything else is bound to follow.'[10]

Indian religious history shows that high spirituality and sainthood has been achieved by many working people like housewives, shoemakers, weavers etc. Shri Krishna, in the past, and Swami Vivekananda, today, go to all working people and whisper to them how to convert their work situation so as to ensure general social welfare, on the one hand, and their own spiritual growth, on the other. Here we see Vedanta going to man in his or her life and work situation, and not expecting man to leave his or her life and work situation to go to Vedanta. This is Swami Vivekananda's message of a comprehensive spirituality which finds eloquent expression in one of his famous utterances:

'Teach yourselves, teach everyone, his real nature; call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'[11]

10. Ibid., pp. 319-20.

11. Ibid., 4th edition, p. 193.

SWAMIJI'S GOSPEL OF MANLINESS

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

While reminiscing her first encounter with Swami Vivekananda, one of his western admirers observed: "He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth, and the third sentence was truth. And I listened to him for seven years and whatever he uttered was to me truth." A prophet of a high order that he was, it is natural that his words always carried the weight of truth, and its import immediately flashed into the hearts of some, if not of all. Nevertheless, from historical outlook, one can discern an evolutionary development in the thought-contents of the prophet. Evidently, in the evolutionary development he travelled not from untruth to truth, but from lower truth to higher truth, and eventually he presented before humanity his unique gospel of manliness—the ennobling redemptive gospel for the regeneration of mankind.

During his second voyage to the West Swamiji spelled out for the first time the gospel of manliness. On board *the Golconda*, he had exclaimed to Sister Nivedita, 'Yes! the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel.' In manliness lies the key to development of man's potentialities, to controlling it and directing it towards desired achievements, secular and spiritual. Imbued with the spirit of manliness man learns to

be his own master, to be in full control of his body and mind and to draw forth from within himself all the powers he needs to achieve his goal. Such a man is, no doubt, the creator of his destiny.

An attentive enquiry reveals two currents running almost parallel to each other through the course of events, which gradually shaped the gigantic personality of Swami Vivekananda. One passed through his idyllic world of imagination, inspiration and idealism while the other coursed through the hard realities of his life wherein men, he said, "are like cattle driven to the slaughter house, hastily nibbling a bite of grass on the roadside as they are driven along under the whip".[1] His sharp intellect and rational mind, chiselled by myriad of western and eastern thoughts and his astounding faith and will, accentuated by the loving tending of the great spiritual giant Sri Ramakrishna successfully merged these two into one mighty current, which coursed through the hazardous gyration of the Swamiji's spiritual growth, ultimately leading to his realising the unity of existence and the deepest faith in himself. The latter two were, however, complimentary to each other and constituted the essence of the religion he preached. Swami Vivekananda once asked his English audience, "What is there to be taught more in religion than the oneness of the universe and faith in oneself ?"[2] Realizing one's identity with the oneness of the universe one gets at his true nature, the ultimate Reality which is infinite, almighty, selfless, free from limitations and thereby one attains faith in oneself at its highest. And faith is one of the most potent factors of humanity. Faith in one's self is the primeval human resource. It helped man everytime in every situation. It has worked wonders. It has never failed man. Behind man stands the vast store of power and strength which never gets exhausted. No sooner strength in man is about to run short than the faith in his own self draws a fresh supply from the inexhaustible storehouse of power and strength. Pointing to the vast potentialities which in the overwhelmingly majority of men and women still remain latent, Swami Vivekananda once said, "Millions of years have passed since man first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested."[3] Without genuine faith in oneself man cannot tap this vast ocean of dormant power. This apart, faith in oneself bears important philosophical significance. In his lecture on 'Freedom of the Soul', Swami Vivekananda, while elucidating the significance of faith in oneself, said, "Faith in one's self means faith in all because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one. It is the great faith which will make the world better. I am sure of that."[4] This interpretation, no doubt, opens up a new horizon. Rooted in the firm belief in the unity of existence one's self expands and embraces all beings as his own by the bond of love. Love emancipates a man from his narrow cage. Rabindranath Tagore observed, 'This love gives us the testimony of the great whole, which is the complete and final truth of man. It offers us the complete and final truth of man. It offers us the immense field where we can have our release from the sole monarchy of hunger, of the growing voice, snarling teeth and tearing claws, from the dominance of the limited material means, the source of cruel envy and ignoble deception, where the largest wealth of the human soul has been

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1. Swamiji's letter dated 4.2.1900 to Sister Christine.
2. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 303.
3. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 301.
4. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 301.

produced through sympathy and cooperation ; through disinterested pursuit of knowledge that recognizes no limit and is unafraid of all time-honoured taboos ; through a strenuous cultivation of intelligence for service that knows no distinction of colour and clime."[5] Thus a man with assured faith in himself throws out from himself like a spider in all directions a web of love providing security and succour to all who come on it. From this unique realization of the unity of existence the deepest faith in himself and concern for humanity sprang up Swamiji's gospel of manliness.

Swamiji's keen insight emanating from his mystical experiences, vast knowledge of history and deep concern for humanity helped him to evolve a comprehensive view about man. From a macrocosmic standpoint all men are one in the substratum called God or Brahman or Ultimate Reality. Swamiji said, "Just as we are all men, yet we are all separate ; as humanity, I am one with you ; as Mr. So-and-so, I am different from you. As a man you are separate from woman, but as human beings you are all one ; as a living being you are one with animals and all that lives, but as man you are separate. That existence is God, the Ultimate Unity in this universe. In Him we are all one."[6] Again, from a microcosmic point of view, Swamiji sees man as a medium, in fact the best medium on this planet earth. The medium is continually trying to manifest as much as it can the infinite strength within in different ways. He said, "A spring of infinite power is coiled up and is inside this little body, and that spring is spreading itself. And as it goes on spreading, body after body is found insufficient ; it throws them off and takes higher bodies. This is the history of man, of religion, civilization, or progress. That giant Prometheus who is bound, is getting himself unbound. It is always a manifestation of strength."[7] Such a comprehensive vision of man suggests that the drive for progressive actualization of infinite potentialities is the motive power for human evolution. The human potentialities are actualized first to meet man's basic physical and psychological needs and thereafter to realise his real nature. No doubt, actualization involves manifestation of strength at all levels—spiritual, mental and physical. And with this strength at his command man can move forward in the puzzling, complex world—the outer world of nature and the inner world of his own nature. Exploring the inexhaustible immensities lying concealed within man's very own being he proceeds and finds one horizon after another coming into view on his triumphant march. In fact, man is continuously striving to break through the shells of his limitations and attain a higher state for himself and his fellows. In fact, man is searching after something which is infinite ; he is seeking for something that is free.

Man dwells in an universe of history. His mind dwells within the cultural stratum, called the 'noasphere' by the paleontologist and philosopher Teilhard de Chardin. Therein the human animal, not exclusively guided by compulsive instincts, learns to wish strongly, to learn techniques for implementing his ideas and to learn also to coordinate all these with devotion and thus take part in the space-time of human existence. But in his conscientious living man continuously feels the paradox that he is not what he is but something greater. He hears an inner call which always goads him to move forward. He feels an urge, sometimes strong at other times weak, to search after something which is infinite, to seek for something

5. Rabindranath Tagore: The Religion of Man, 1931, p. 30.

6. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries, Vol. IV, p. 82-83.

7. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VIII, p 185.

that is free. This infinite freedom means independence of anything outside and to attain to it, man moves heaven and earth. But his hard search ends with the conviction that unfettered freedom lies in his very nature. Observed Swamiji, "Man after his search finds out that his infinite freedom that he was placing in imagination all the time in the nature outside is the internal subject, the eternal Soul of souls; this Reality, he himself."[8]

Any man is as richly endowed with human potentialities as was Buddha or Christ. Swami Vivekananda asserted, "Know that though one may be a little bubble and another may be a mountain-high wave yet behind both the bubble and the wave there is the infinite ocean. The infinite ocean is the background of me as well as you. Mine also is the infinite ocean of life, of power, of spirituality as well as yours."[9] However, there is a difference. In the case of Buddha or Christ, their inborn potentialities had been largely actualized and in others it is not. In fact, the difference between an ordinary man and a Buddha or Christ only lies in the degree of actualization of potentialities.

Often it has been argued that the greatest stumbling block on way to actualization of immense possibilities is the human nature which is unchangeable. Determined by the *samskaras*, 'the latent self-reproductive impression of the past acts of dharma and adharma', and/or by the genetic configuration, human nature refuses to undergo desired transformation. The Gita too mentions "प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ?" 'All beings follow their nature; what shall coercion avail ?' Even if this be true, what passes as nature, perhaps is not nature. Philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote, "But we now know, thanks to psychologists and physiologists, that what passes as 'human nature' is at most one-tenth nature and the other nine-tenths being nurture. What is called human nature can be almost completely changed by changes in early education."[10] Education, therefore, can help one to overcome the constraints of his nature, if any. It also equips him with the tools to gradually actualise his latent potentialities. Explaining further his standpoint Swamiji in his last lecture held in the city of Los Angeles, said, "The utility of this science (of Yoga) is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just as a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean. This science wants you to be strong, to take the work in your hand, instead of leaving it in the hands of nature, and get beyond this little life. That is the great idea."[10-A]

Now, what does all these imply? They suggest that we can stand on our own. And it need not be emphasised that when all responsibility is thrown upon ourselves, it makes us work at our best and highest. Self-esteem and faith in ourselves give us strength, the all-cure medicine for the world's diseases. They help us to keep off weaknesses which are practically at the root of all evils. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength and acquiring strength. And for securing strength for self-reliance one need not and should not run hither and thither, for man himself has Store of fuel enough to supply as much strength as he needs. To help man's vast latent potentialities to find expression, Swami Vivekananda offered a new religion. The new religion demanded that man must have

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8. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 401.

9. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 444.

10. Bertrand Russell: Sceptical Essays (6th Impr.) 1956, p. 250.

10-A. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries, Vol. V, p. 296.

faith in himself. As against this, the old religion asked man to cultivate faith in gods and goddesses. Imbued with *shraddha* or faith in oneself even a man of common clay can feel the spark of the divine power within him. Explaining religion as the most potent tool in the process of human evolution Swamiji said, "Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man."[11] Making manifest this inherent strength in man, a truly religious man gets his consciousness expanded more and more till he grasps his real nature which is unchangeable and eternal. In fact the infinite and eternal meaning of human life is the message of all the religions at heart.[12] And this he comprehends with the aid of the new religion.

Apparently, Swamiji's idea is akin to modern thoughts on humanism which harps on self-confidence and anti-authoritarianism. Humanism proceeds from an assumption that man is on his own and this life is all. Man is entirely responsible for his own life and for the life of mankind. Fundamentally, humanism treats man as an end. And to a radical humanist, divinity of man is merely an illusory product. Eventually, modern humanism has moved a step forward. As for example, Blackham claims, 'Indeed, humanism is the permanent alternative to religion, an essentially different way of taking and tackling human life in the world.'[13] Scientific and rational humanism logically leads to such raw materialism but to limit the vision about man to this extent goes very much against the spirit of humanism itself.

The humanists of the Renaissance in western Europe asserted the intrinsic value of man's life and the greatness of his potentialities. In course of time, humanism asserted itself not only against ecclesiastical influence but also against secular orthodoxies that subordinated man to some abstract concepts. According to Aristotle, man is a political animal. 'Man', Edmund Burke said, 'is a religious animal'. With the advancement of specialization man has been studied in parts by different sciences, each of which claims autonomy. The studies differ from one another. But in all such studies we miss man in his totality. Also we miss a grand vision of man, the best and most complex creation on the earth's surface.

There are various shades of humanism. Literary humanism is the humanism associated with the European rediscovery of Greek and Latin literature during Renaissance. Followers of 'scientific humanism' puts the accent on their scientific attitude. Religious humanism vary in range between the interplay of human and divine. As for example, a 'christian humanist' gives full value to human life in this world and allows it a relative autonomy, for he believes that it is God's world and therein man enjoys God-given autonomy. Although, the last few decades have witnessed a widespread breakdown of traditional beliefs and a fantastic growth of knowledge about man, about human society, about art and history and also religion, the large chunks of the new knowledge as well as of the old knowledge about man are lying around unused. Pride and prejudice of modern humanists have more often than not failed to recognise and accept all sides of human nature as also the vast resource lying behind man. For lack of perspective free from provincialisms and ethnocentricities, the humanists often fail to assess man's vast potentialities. Moreover, none of the concepts upheld by various shades of humanism promise to sort out the increasing problems of man, or hold out a genuinely bright future of man. On the other hand, some thinking people have become increasingly sceptical whether man

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11. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VII, p. 185.
12. Edward Howard Griggs: The New Humanism, 3rd Edition, 1900, p. 237.
13. H.I. Blackham; Humanism (1976), Preface.

alone can adequately cope with the business of living and the problem of destiny, the full meaning of which he only dimly surmises. Does the nature of man as a material system and as part of a society subject to coercion by predominant interests, permit him to make any independent decisions? Moreover, modern humanists have over-emphasised rationality, although in the rough-and-tumble of practical affairs complete rationality is an utopia. The famous rationalist Bertrand Russell admitted, "Complete rationality is no doubt an unattainable ideal.... Education, the press, politics, religion—in a word, all the great forces in the world—are at present on the side of irrationality; they are in the hands of men who flatter King Demos in order to lead him astray."[14]

Swami Vivekananda's doctrine, however, squarely meets the deficiencies, provides a befitting solution to man's problems and also envisages a glorious millennium. In his conception man is not simply an animal which inhabits the three worlds of electro-chemical events of first-order experiences and of language on every level of abstraction.[15] He is not just a meaningless cog in the social machine, nor merely a hapless prey of the vast impersonal forces. Man is potentially all powerful. Man is more valuable than all the wealth of the world. Man is a divine spark, man is divinity itself. Swamiji's Guru, Sri Ramakrishna made clear the uniqueness of man when he said, "Is man an insignificant thing? He can think of God, he can think of the infinite, while other living beings cannot. God exists in other animals, plants, nay, in all beings—but He manifests Himself more through man than through these others."[16] Man is not only a part of God, but he is God. Sri Ramakrishna also said, "It is God Himself who plays about as human beings."[17] Swamiji elaborated the same concept in his lecture on Practical Vedanta. He said, "The living God is within you, and yet you are building churches and temples and believing all sorts of imaginary nonsense. The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage."[18] Such a grand vision of man is at the root of Barui Chandidas's conviction that, 'the truth of man is the highest truth, there is no other truth above it.' Swamiji's vision of man electrified thinking men and women in the west. And in India the true message of humanism had remained inchoate till Swamiji appeared on the scene and inspired people's confidence in their own abilities and strength.

Now, religion and education are the only two effective tools, a man can make use of to actualise his potentiality. In the ordinary sense, religion is philosophy concretised and education, with religion at its care, provides the essential framework for the cultivation of faith, confidence and strength on the basis of every man having the highest potentiality. Making man aware of his true nature, Swami Vivekananda wanted man to stand on his own and demanded of him to be fully self-reliant. According to the Indian tradition, education, with religion at its care, makes man conscious and convinced of his immense potentiality, teaches him to determine the goal to achieve which he needs to actualise his potentiality. This is in essence man-making education, which places man on the pedestal of self-reliance. Swamiji's

14. Bertrand Russell: Sceptical Essays, 1956, p. 53.
15. Editor Julian Huxley: 'The Humanist Frame' (1961), p. 420.
16. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (New York Edn., 1984), p. 432.
17. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (New York Edn., 1984), p. 407.
18. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 320-21.

pragmatism suggested that man should be taken where he was and be given a push forward. Swamiji said, "The light divine is obscure in most people. It is like a lamp in a cask of iron ; no gleam of light can shine through it ; gradually by purity and unselfishness, we can make the obscuring medium less dense, until at last it becomes as transparent as glass." Knowing fully well that only positive guidance and personal life can help a learner, Swamiji referred to Buddha as the best exemplifier of his doctrine of man's innate ability to save himself. He paraphrased Buddha's last message to his disciple Ananda: 'Weep not for me. Think not for me. I am gone. Work out diligently your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you. What I am today is what I made myself.... Believe not because an old book is produced as an authority. Believe not because your fathers said you should believe the same. Believe not because other people like you believe it. Test everything, try everything, and then believe it, and if you find it for the good of many, give it to all.' In Swamiji's esteem, Buddha had personified manliness at its highest. And in the recent history we find 'manliness at its highest' brilliantly shining in the life of Swami Vivekananda himself. Verily, he was the lion of a man, the living illustration of आत्मदीपो भव, the essence of Buddha's teachings. Swamiji was not only a light unto himself but a beacon light to guide humanity.

Spitem Zarathusthra gave the valuable guidance: 'Before you chose which of two paths to tread, ... Wake up, alert to spread Ahura's word'[19] As one sows so he reaps, and therefore man's free-will decides his future. This teaching gave his followers confidence in their own strength. By force of will and deeds of sacrifice they strove to conquer *haurvatat,* welfare in this world and *ameratat,* immortality in the other. In reality, however, man's so called free-will is not always that free to take an independent decision for himself. Admitting that man often forgets his true potentiality and gets stuck in the morass of despair, Sri Krishna came to his rescue. He roared out, 'Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha. It does not become thee. Cast off this base weakness of heart and arise....'[20] Some millennia later Swami Vivekananda was perhaps more emphatic when he said, "Life is but a play ground, however gross the play may be. However, we may receive blows, and however knocked about we may be, the soul is there and is never injured. Be not afraid. Think not how many times you fail. Never mind. Time is infinite. Go forward ; assert yourself again and again, and light must come."[21] An idealist and a realist, two in one that he was, Swamiji hold out the magnificence of man. The key to his gospel of manliness lay in understanding the meaning of 'Get hold of yourself' and 'Get hold of the Self'—to be more specific, to realise the identity of the 'self' and the 'Self'. Man realises that the over-brooding power in whom 'he lives, moves and has his being' is one with his being. 'You' and 'me' and all variety is merged into the absolute unity, the one infinite existence—God. Indian seers in different ages realised this unity and lived a life according to that vision.

In history's remote dawn the Upanishads held out this grand truth providing unending succour and strength, but the mediaeval literature like the Puranas presented the Divine as so vast and overpowering that one after another mediating powers, gods and goddesses, were developed to propitiate the awe-inspiring Divine. So the process went on leaving man trembling in terror before the conceptions of his own power,

19. The Gathas of Zarathrushtra, Yasna 30.2.

20. The Gita, Chap. II, Sloka-3.

21. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 401-04.

who were lifted to the skies. Besides, man being dimly aware of the mystery of the Infinite Divine in his life and the world, is sometimes over-run by a feeling of dread or of greed of gain and takes recourse to ceremonialism, occultism or mystery-mongering. This is true of all historical religions. Denouncing such religion of fear, Swamiji exhorted the modern world, 'No bending the knee. Always stiffening the backbone fight it out, whatever comes.... There is a beautiful mythological story. There were two angels in God's paradise. They did something wrong and were cursed that they would fall and become man. When falling, they cried, "Lord, is there no mercy for us? How many births shall we have?" The Lord said, "Seven births as worshippers, but only three as enemies." They chose to be enemies of the gods and got out quick. The more you cling to superstitions and priests and fear you make the hell here. Hell is here. There is no other place. This impotence does not befit thee. Awake and arise.... Stand up and fight. Die if you must. Die game. There is none to help you. Thou are the world. Who help thee?'[22] The Gita too proclaimed उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम् 'a man has to raise himself'; for आत्मैवह्यात्मना बन्धु: 'he alone is a friend of himself'; but it was perhaps not enough to arouse a faultering man. Realising this Swamiji whipped up the indolent man to shed off his persisting diffidence. To dispel man's sheep-like nature Swamiji would thunder, "Have faith that you are born to do great things". His watchward was the Upanishadic dictum "Arise, Awake".

In the same vein, Swamiji went still further when he declared "Buddha and Christs do more harm than good—for mankind is trying to imitate them instead of developing its own character." Though shaken to the core by such radical pronouncement, his audience did not fail to appreciate his main theme, the drawing forth of the best and the highest in man. Imitation can at best make an ass a better ass, but never a horse. By imitation, one cannot strike out on one's own. Slavery of thought chokes the heart of a man for want of free vent. Pointing to the inherent weakness of man Polanyi correctly observed, "The admirer of Napoleon does not judge him by independent, previously established standards, but accepts, on the contrary, the figure of Napoleon as a standard even for judging himself."[23] No doubt, we need reverence to perceive greatness, but such reverence should not, in any case, delude us as to fail to appreciate ingenuity, nor should it weaken our self-esteem. Therefore Swamiji's guideline was, "Think something new! Struggle towards the highest goal. Move with confidence and the 'Light must come'". Here we may quote one incident from Swamiji's life by way of illustration. Swamiji sometimes used to meditate on the heart of a lion, for that gave him strength.

A free soul that he was, he refused to give in the game of chivalry, a remnant of the Victorian culture. Swamiji bluntly told his women disciple, "You are as able as I am. Why should I help you? Because you are a woman? That is chivalry... and don't you see what is behind all these attentions from man to women?"[24] Ideal of manliness or ideal of womanhood is created by our imagination in keeping with our hopes and aspirations, within the orbit of the ethics and traditions of our community. Evidently it is not confined to some static mental qualities and conducts. The ideal can be raised and Swamiji raised it to the highest, for man according to him, is basi-

22. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries, Vol. VI, p. 210-11.

23. Michael Polanyi: The Study of Man (1958), p. 96.

24. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries, Vol. III, p. 165.

cally the eternal Spirit, bereft of sex, colour, creed, etc. He would not allow even his disciples to unnecessarily depend upon him, not to make things easy for them but to teach them that they have the necessary will and strength. He convinced them that they have all the will and strength to brave the future. He would thunder, "Stand upon your own feet. You have the power within you". The idea with the urgency of his conviction behind it used to make deep impression on his listeners.

Still further moves Swami Vivekananda and reaches a new height at which his gospel of manliness shines forth in all brightness. At that height man is not judged by his wickedness or goodness. After all, wickedness, goodness, etc. are acquired qualities. Swamiji looks straight into the inherent glory of man which is his nature. He says, "All the thieves and the murderers, all the unjust, the weakest, the wickedest, the devils, they all are my Christ! I owe a worship to the God Christ and to the demon Christ! That is my doctrine, I cannot help it. My salutation goes to the feet of the good, the saintly, and the feet of the wicked and the devilish! They are all my teachers, all my spiritual fathers, all are my Saviours. I may curse one and yet benefit by his failings ; I may bless another and benefit by his good deeds. This is as true as I stand here."[25]

Though truth and nothing but truth, this doctrine of Swamiji may appear too idealistic in a world beset with fear, hesitation, trepidation etc. at every moment of life. In this world we try to make our weakness look like strength, our cowardice like courage, our sentiments like love, etc. We pose ourselves as religious, philosophers or ascetics. But as long as we have identified ourselves with our bodies and thereby have become slaves to misery and happiness, we cannot claim to be in ourselves. What is real in us is the Spirit. Spirituality and its cultural expression religion help us realise our real nature. They bring changes in us, gradually unfolding our real nature. Even in religious worship, the worshipper has first to imagine that he is divine. The scripture says देवो भूत्वा यजेद्देवम्, नादेवो देवमर्चयेत् (*Shaktisangam Tantra*, 8/22) Worship is no doubt a religious exercise which gradually instils into the worshipper's mind that he is divine. As the Spirit is revealed therewith manifesting strength and spiritual self-reliance in man, mankind progresses steadily. To make the Spirit manifest itself in every moment of life, which was Swamiji's chief mission, he gave his last call at San Francisco, in which he threw the full weight of the power of his character. It was the direct stirring of his soul which made him say, "Stand up and be strong! No fear. No superstition. Face the truth as it is! If death comes—that is the worst of our miseries—let it come! We are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know. I have not attained to it, but I am struggling to do it. I may not, but you may. Go on!"[26] They had a tremendous impact on his audience. They are still ringning through his works and those who read them with rapt attention feel the shock of it.

Recorded history of man abounds with striking characters who illustrate gloriously the gospel of manliness. One such character in recent times is the born blind genius Helen Keller who even at the age of 87 believed that 'life is either a daring adventure or nothing.' Another is the frail-looking Mahatma Gandhi, who on the eve of his march to Dandi in 1930 made the remarkable statement, 'The history of the world is full of instances of men who rose to leadership by sheer force of self-confidence, bravery and tenacity.' And of this,

25. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 34.

26. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 479-80.

he was no doubt the living example. Nevertheless Swamiji, aware of the hold the legends and traditions have on the people, placed before his countrymen as ideal of manliness the character of Mahavir Hanuman, who 'represents the ideal of service on the one hand and on the other he represents leonine courage, striking the world with awe.' Perhaps much more shining an example is Swamiji himself whose life gave the best demonstration of his unique gospel of manliness. Fearlessness or अभी: was his guiding motto. His master Sri Ramakrishna, who himself straddled two worlds, the world of consciousness and the world of materials, persuaded him into eschewing personal salvation and growing into a huge spreading banyan tree sheltering millions of weary souls.

No doubt, Swamiji's gospel of manliness is a charter of the indomitable spirit of man. Each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. More than a declaration of human rights, the gospel illumines our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love and goads us into doing dedicated service for the good of the humanity. As we seriously study Vivekananda there appears before us the vision of the great Sannyasin, representative of the eternal India, staff in hand, clear-eyed and firm of step, striding along the dusty road of the earth and preaching the gospel of manliness. His spirit, working today among our midst, is determined to lead the humanity to the glorious goal at which it should know that it is one with the Spirit.

A LEGACY OF VIVEKANANDA

(The Ashrama as Model for Western Centers)

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

During the first five years of my residence at the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Hollywood, Ujjvala (Ida Ansell) was still alive. We quickly became collaborators. I was the editor of the Vedanta magazine, and she possessed a good deal of valuable material, from her associations in Northern California years before with four direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. No devotee, much less an editor, could have been anything but be intrigued by this cache. Hence we worked together, Ujjvala recalling events and facts, based on notes and relics which she had preserved, while I stood over her in a mildly threatening manner, encouraging her to write her recollections down in time for the next deadline! As a result, we have Ujjvala's memories of Swami Vivekananda in San Francisco, her firsthand story of Swami Turiyananda's experiment at Shanti Ashrama, thirteen previously unpublished lectures of Swami Vivekananda, and Ujjvala's souvenirs of Swami Trigunatitananda.

"All very interesting," the reader will remark, "but what has this to do with the topic at hand?" Just this: two of these direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna—Swami Turiyananda and Swami Trigunatita—working in the West, emphasized the ashrama as a model of organization. Ujjvala's recollections of this, as participant, were vivid. That is what I propose to develop in this article—the idea of the ashrama as a modern and effective means for organizing

Ramakrishna-Vedanta work in the West at the present time and in the future.

Swami Turiyananda rejected city work and took his students to Shanti Ashrama. There he hoped, in reproducing the old forest existence of Bharat, to deepen the spiritual life of the adepts, and this, as we have heard from several who were participants, he surely did. Swami Trigunatita, while basing his main effort in San Francisco, led his devotees regularly to Shanti Ashrama for periods of intense sadhana.

Not to forget a third enthusiast for the ashrama, Swami Vivekananda. It was he who accepted the San Antonio Valley acreage which became Shanti Ashrama. Before that, impressed by the Greenacre experience in 1894, Swamiji had made some tentatives toward acquiring property in upper New York state with ashrama possibilities in mind. We may conclude that it was shortness of the time allotted him which prevented Swamiji from developing the potentialities anticipated. Further, we possess an important statement from Swamiji on the subject of the ashrama, included in the letter he wrote to Swami Kripananda from Switzerland in 1896: "Here...are no ashramas. Would there was one. How I would like it and what an amount of good it would do to this country."

My remarks thus are based upon the authority of three of our great leaders. I speak also from personal experience. The center where I serve at Gretz, France, has functioned as an ashrama for forty years; during more than half of that period my job there has been that of what is called in India the Manager Maharaj.

Because of the force of circumstances, in the early days all the Vedanta centers in the West were begun in private houses in the downtown sections of big cities. Habitually one or two of the larger rooms were thrown together to serve as an auditorium, and elsewhere in the building living space was made available for the Resident Swami. Usually there was a library, open to members at designated hours. A room somewhere in the building might be set aside as a shrine, but the use of this was generally restricted to certain hours and a carefully selected clientele. As time went on the situation had a tendency to liberalize; in some centers a worship and meditation room available to a larger public was opened, and a dining hall was added where devotees could take prasad after puja celebrations.

In their mode of operation these centers resembled Christian Churches—Verbal instruction and attendance at a ritual being common characteristics. In both, the Sunday sermon or lecture was the main attraction, delivered by a consecrated leader. And the regular celebration of the Christian Mass was matched in Vedanta centers in the West by the gradual inclusion of the faithful in ritualistic worship accompanied by meditation.

(It is interesting to recall that the carvings in the great Christian churches we so admire were instituted as visual aids for the largely illiterate congregations of an earlier age. The statues and capitols of columns, formerly brightly coloured, served, a little like the comic books of today, to graphically illustrate Biblical stories expounded from the pulpit by the priest. As the public became more literate and the sermon became less important, other features were added, in order to attract the public—gymnasiums, social halls, and the like. The latest effort to make Catholic ritual more available to the layman is the taking of the Mass close to the congregation. Mystery has been replaced by a gesture of fellowship. In earlier times, the priest and the congregation all faced in the same direction, toward the high altar at the far end of the church, where were kept the consecrated wine and the sacred bread. Under the new system the priest faces the communicants, with his

back to the holy of holies, and celebrates the mystery of the Mass in the manner of a gracious host presiding over a buffet table. Those habituated to Hindu worship regret the absence in this arrangement of any focal point—a portrait or an image—which represents the Deity and forms a center for concentration and adoration.)

In France hundreds of sanctuaries are closed for want of clergy and believers. I suggest that Vedanta centers, if they continue to function in the old way—mainly giving verbal instruction coupled with some meditation possibilities and participation by the faithful in the ritual—may have to face a similar situation. Vedanta centers are not growing as rapidly as they should, cosidering the importance of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and the needs of the times.

We have, fortunately, an opportunity to proceed according to another model—that of the ashrama. I contend that the ashrama meets today's needs and can afford Ramakrishna-Vedanta a good chance to grow in the West.

Ideally an ashrama is a large property in the countryside, at a convenient distance from an important urban area and center of road, rail, and air travel. It provides living and working quarters for a good many people, plus a meeting hall and chapel. Devotees—yes, and this is important—non-devotees and potential devotees also—indeed, any suitable spiritual seeker—may come to the ashrama and there reside for longer or shorter periods. The ashrama should be directed by a Ramakrishna Swami, but the personnel in residence must not necessarily be monastic. Up to now we have assumed that anyone coming to a Western center to live must be of a suitable age and intention to be able in course of time to "join" as a monastic. This principle has proved itself again and again to be unrealistic. We understand now how uncommitted, how freedom-seeking, are the young people of today. It may be best to organize ashrama life somewhat like that followed in some Buddhist countries where young men spend a period in a monastery without commitment, in order to obtain a moral basis for later life. From our experience at Gretz, instead of agonizing over the fact that novices do not persist and become monastics, we find that those who stay for a period of time and then leave often turn out to be excellent householders, admirable future supporters of the center, and convincing publicists for the Ramakrishna movement. Of course, the occasional inmate will choose to stay on and eventually become a member of the Order.

Not all the underprivileged of this world, the deprived, the hungry, live in Third World countries. A great many of them reside in American or European high-rise apartment buildings or suburban bungalows, bombarded by lethal doses of TV programming, sensate advertising, and constant assurances that sex and money insure happiness. This diet of intellectual junkfood produces junkfood's predictable result—people satiated and at the same time undernourished and hungry.

The ashrama provides an alternative to this modern materialistic way of life. The ashrama should be open in permanence; those who live in the nearby city may spend their Sundays there, or week-ends. Those who live in surrounding areas may come annually or semi-annually for longer stays. Gretz, for example, draws from Paris and from all of France; and as well from Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy, and Spain. How we wish that we who direct the center or our guests or both possessed the Gift of Tongues in order that we might each understand the other in his own language—an inconvenience which ashramas in the USA can happily escape! One of the functions of the ashrama is to liberate interested people residing in the hinterland from

having to learn their Vedanta simply through books. And an ashrama organized as I describe it helps overcome the difficulty we face always of there being too few Vedanta centers in the West because of the position taken by our leadership prohibiting new centers or branches from being founded.

Like the painted sculptures in medieval churches, the way of life followed in the ashrama can give a vivid object-lesson to today's spiritually illiterate on how life should be organized in this difficult century. Ashrama-ites can experience the attraction of a sane life, centered around a spiritual ideal, and learn to emulate it. The daily routine of the ashrama—the periods of meditation, the opportunities for manual work, the occasions it affords to absorb something about maintaining a shelter and producing food—can bring people back to fundamentals. There is much to be learned, as earlier generations knew, from contact with vegetables, fruit trees, domestic animals, bees. Contemplating a tree pursuing its seasonal changes, while visualizing the Intelligence which directs that cycle, can be as uplifting as a scriptural text. At Gretz our grounds have become a nature preserve, and although we are only twenty miles from the heart of Paris, wild creatures live in peace in our forest, including deer and foxes. Going to sleep to birdcalls is better than taking tranquilizers.

I have not mentioned the program which can be carried out in the ashrama. But I am convinced that it should not be based primarily on verbal instruction. The charisma of the monastic leadership will hold everything together and give direction; while the regular sessions in the meditation hall will work their eventual magic of character change. Such a variety of people will come, possessing so many skills, having such fresh and youthful views, that a dynamic program will practically form of itself—from animal husbandry to organic gardening, from the study of music to the practice of relaxation techniques, from editing and the study of languages and scriptures to repairs and maintenance. Perhaps the most telling instruction will be imparted by the very atmosphere.

I am of course aware that some of our Western Vedanta centers already do what I am describing to a certain extent. Several maintain properties to which members go in the summer. Positive as such retreats are, these activities are not what I have in mind. They are of short duration and are generally limited to members of the center's in-group. The activity I witnessed last summer at the Vedanta Convention in Ganges, Michigan, and which I understand is carried on to some extent all the year round, comes closer to the scenario which I have sketched.

The model which I have outlined here can provide a real service for troubled men and women and should, if put into operation, result in a formidable expansion of Ramakrishna's influence. I say this on the basis of the Gretz experience, which is thrusting us increasingly into the embarrassing position of being unable to cope with an increasing demand for accommodations. But of course conducting an ashrama is not easy; making ten litres of curd every day, washing and hanging out on the laundry line fifty sheets and pillowcases after a busy week-end, giving a meal in the late evening in the pleasant manner of Swami Premananda to guests whose arrival has been delayed—such duties require commitment. And the continual presence of people, and what that entails in terms of interpersonal relations! About the same, I sometimes think, as operating a resort hotel in peak season.

Yes, a real spirit of service is needed to conduct an ashrama. The spiritual life of the personnel is enhanced as much as, or more than, that of the guests, no doubt

about that! I often tell our boys, and the many devotees who take regular responsibilities for keeping things going, "It is true that you are not heroically doing famine relief or looking after orphans or serving in a hospital as so many of our members in India are doing. But in helping to make the ashrama well ordered, peaceful, and beautiful, so that our guests can be happy and comfortable here, you are offering noble service of a different sort. The West has plenty of its own kind of disaster victims who require relief, too."

A few days ago an affluent Dutch couple, who had finished a short sojourn with us, came to say good-bye. Frank said: "We used to take a month in Italy or at the seaside, but a week at Gretz does more for us than that kind of vacation ever did. Here we have had an experience which heals, instructs, inspires, and makes us better people." Sylvia added: "Gretz is an inspiration to me and shows me how to order my everyday life at home. Just to know that a place like this exists makes me love Sri Ramakrishna and believe in God."

VIVEKANANDA AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN KERALA

(Kumaran Asan, Dr. Palpu, Shri Narayana Guru and the S.N.D.P. Movement.)

SHANKARI PRASAD BASU

(1)

Mahakavi Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) was one of the three great creators of the golden age of Malayalam literature, the other two being Ulloor S. Parameshwara Iyer (1879-1949) and Vallathol Narayana Menon (1875-1958). These three poets are popularly known as Asan, Ulloor and Vallathol. All of them were influenced by Swami Vivekananda whose influence was most pronounced on Asan.

Kumaran Asan, "the first great creative genius to come from the socially backward classes in modern Kerala", was born on 12 April 1873, "at Kayikkara, a small coastal village some twenty five miles to the north of Trivandrum." His father was a trader of humble means, but "in his own way a cultivated man." Asan in his boyhood learnt a little of Sanskrit and Malayalam under a village school master. He came in contact with Shri Narayana Guru some time before he reached twenty. Later, with the help of Dr. Palpu, a highly placed officer at the Native State of Mysore, he went to Bangalore and was admitted there as a student at the Vedanta College. After sometime he first moved to Madras and then to Calcutta, the acknowledged centre of cultural renaissance in the 19th century India, in order to study Sanskrit and English. After a two-year stay he returned to Kerala in 1900 and stayed at Aruvippuram, a village to the south of Trivandrum, with his teacher, Narayana Guru, helping him in his work. When in 1903 Narayana Guru started 'Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam', (S.N.D.P. in abbreviation), Dr. Palpu became the chief organiser, and Asan its first secretary. The primary objective of the organisation was all-round reform and development of the backward Eazhava community. For 16 years Asan worked as its secretary, the period recognised as the heyday of the institution. He also edited its journal *Vivekodayam*. Asan was not much interested in things purely political and was moderate in his attitude in the pre-independence period

of India. He represented the Eazhava community in Travancore State Legislature, as a nominated member for many years, and became instrumental in founding many educational institutions and also centres for spiritual culture on behalf of the S.N.D.P. In 1923 he became its president. After leading a life of a celibate for many years in association of his Guru, he in his early forties fell in love with Sm. Bhanumati Amma, whom he married in 1918. She bore him two sons. In 1924 Asan died in a boat accident.[1]

(2)

Kumaran Asan's important role in Kerala's social and cultural life, especially in relation to the Eazhava community, can be seen in two fields: one, the field of literature, the other, social reform. These two roles were inter-related, as Asan's poetry largely bore the message of social reform. In both fields Narayana Guru's influence was profound on him but no less was Vivekananda's. If it cannot be ascertained that Narayana Guru got his main social ideas from Swamiji, it is nevertheless, historically true that the Guru started his social movements after Vivekananda's advent which created mighty waves of the awakening of the masses in the subcontinent. The trends of reform activities undertaken by Narayana Guru followed more or less the lines determined by Vivekananda. Here it will be relevant to present an important and interesting account which shows Vivekananda's significant though indirect influence even on the formation of the S.N.D.P.

Late R. Sugatan, an important member of the Communist Party of India in Kerala, one of the chief organisers of the labour movement there, himself belonging to the Eazhava community, wrote an article on Vivekananda, which appeared in *Kerala Kaumudi*, on 22 January 1963. Incidentally, this Malayalam daily with the largest circulation at the time, was owned and conducted by persons belonging to the same community. R. Sugatan acknowledged in open and unequivocal terms the great influence Swamiji exerted on Kerala and India. "Vivekananda was the heroic sannyasin who cleared his path in life by his own purity, self-control and broad outlook," he wrote. In the same article Sugatan wrote, "When I read in Asan's poem *Nalini*—By nis courageous and pleasant face he announced that he is fearless and merciful to all'—in my mind flashes the faces of two sannyasins—one that of Swami Vivekananda and the other that of Shri Narayana Guru." Though a Marxist, Sugatan did not ignore the spiritual message of Vivekananda, and wrote,

> "The path shown by Vivekananda is the Path. Those who follow the ever-greedy demonic powers... in this atomic age... will never for a moment have peace and quiet. Even in this Sputnik age we see men putting others in chains... and murdering them wholesale. Nations are divided on arbitrary boundaries and conflicting rights.... And how shining and hopeful was Swami Vivekananda's message against this background of darkness." "Of all the slaveries mental slavery was the worst," Sugatan quoted Vivekananda and added, "He spreads this message not only within the boundaries of India but all over the world. And finishing successfully a superhuman task undertaken within a short period of his life between 30 and 40, that divine man entered Mahasamadhi with a perfect sense of fulfilment."

Sugatan emphasised Vivekananda's role in Indian social context:

> "It was Swami Vivekananda who made us aware of our slavery and inspired us for national freedom. The wonder of it was that he did this through his religious and spiritual talks and lectures. It was Swami Vivekananda who first loudly proclaimed that without removal of caste, poverty and ignorance of the masses, Indian freedom is an impossibility."

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[1] G. Kumara Pillai, Kumaran Asan, published by Kumaran Asan Memorial Managing Committee, Thonnakkal, Trivandrum (1972).

To give an instance how Vivekananda's "Clarion call" roused Kerala and India "from its slumber and ignorance", Sugatan presented facts relating to Vivekananda's inspiration in the formation of the S.N.D.P.:

"On his way to Kerala, Vivekananda (in his parivrajaka days), reached Mysore and there he met Dr. Palpu. During their talks, Dr. Palpu thoroughly briefed Swamiji about the inhuman caste system and the insults and injuries the lower castes suffered from the upper caste Hindus. Thus briefed, Swamiji told Dr. Palpu, 'Find out a good sannyasin from your own community, place him at the centre and organise the lower castes to uplift them. Agitate against untouchability. The lower castes themselves have to do that. No one will come forward to uplift the suppressed and the depressed except themselves.'

"It was after this that Dr. Palpu returned to Travancore (his home State) and discovered Narayana Guru. And it was then that the Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam was formed. Shri Narayana Guru was the 'rising sun' of that organisation.

"It was after initiating Dr. Palpu with the Bijamantra to awaken Kerala and set it on the path of sanity, Vivekananda entered Kerala and condemned it as a lunatic asylum. All the social, cultural and political movements which came later for cleaning that Augean Stable like Shri Narayana Guru's founding of temples, establishment of S.N.D.P., the struggle against caste system, agitation against untouchability, the famous Vaikom Satyagraha, struggle for Temple Entry under the leadership of Shri T.K. Mahadevan, call against conversion into other religions, agitation for representation in Legislature for lower castes, fight for national freedom in Kerala—everything had their origin in the encounter between Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Palpu at Mysore. In the *Vivekodayam* magazine, which was the organ of the S.N.D.P., and first edited by Kumaran Asan and later managed by the Varkala Ashrama, Mahakavi Asan himself, while writing the obituary note on Swami Chaitanya, had referred to the meeting between Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Palpu at Mysore and the conversation they had together. I am writing this from my memory. I don't go into more detail about this for want of space."[2]

Vivekananda-Palpu meeting took place in late 1892. In the meantime Swamiji deeply thought over the problem of caste. But even in his bitterness against the system he felt that it could not be undone only by attacking

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R. Sugatan's valuable article and translation of the same into English. Shri Lakshmi Kanta Boral, Shri Bimal Kumar Ghosh and myself accompanied him to the *Kerala Kaumudi* office on 20.10.1971, and obtained permission for using the article from Mr. K. Sukumaran, the managing director of the paper. Swami Maitrananda secured for me more relevant material from Swami Siddhinathananda relating to Vivekananda-Palpu meeting, and Vivekananda's dominant influence on some of Kumaran Asan's important poems against social background.

Swami Siddhinathananda gathered from Shri Gangadharan, one of Dr. Palpu's sons, the same account that has been given in Sugatan's article. Shri Gangadharan was a journalist. In 1940, in presence of Swami Ojasananda and Swami Siddhinathananda at Bangalore, he described how Dr. Palpu suffered in Kerala at the hands of the diehard caste Hindus, could not secure a suitable job there because of caste prejudices, though he had requisite qualifications. Swamiji after hearing from him the harrowing tales of injustice and tyrannies of the upper class on the lower, said, "Why do you go after the Brahmins ? Find out some good noble person from among your own people and follow him. Suppose in a house there are four brothers and one of them is good and devout. If the other brothers consider him lazy, good-for-nothing and hypocritical, he would in course of time turn out to be so. If on the other hand they consider him really good and noble and follow him, then he would be established in his ideals and they would in turn be ennobled by following him. So you try to find out some good person from your own community and follow his advice." Shri Gangadharan added, "Dr. Palpu took Swamiji's advice seriously, searched for such a leader and discovered him in Shri Narayana Guru, who had by then established himself as a religious teacher and preacher."

Shri Gangadharan narrated the same incident some years later to Dr. Ponnam (Gangadharan was a chronic Asthma patient) at the Trivandrum Ramakrishna Ashrama Dispensary where Siddhinathanandaji was also present.

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2. I am deeply indebted to Swami Maitrananda of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission for

it from outside. The revolt must come from within. He knew quite well the history of the Bhakti movement in upper India in the middle ages. Bhakti movement led by more than one religious leaders with different philosophical strands were more or less unanimous in their attacks against ritualism, caste, community strifes, and religious conflicts. All of them advocated love, peace, and harmony. To Swamiji's understanding, these types of movements by a given number of people will help in creating new sects but the millions of lower caste Hindus would not be uplifted thereby. Perhaps Swamiji preferred the path shown by Shri Chaitanya, and realised in action by his friend and associate Shri Nityananda. Nityananda, a wandering monk for eight years in India, had enough experience of the social ills of the Hindu society. Against that background he organised the Vaishnavas of Bengal, and successfully tried to incorporate the oppressed Buddhists (oppressed by the Muslim rulers and the caste Hindus) in the Vaishnava fold. Nityananda did not try for the impossible task of forcing the Vaishnavas into the established *Varnas* of Hinduism. He thought it worthwhile to create a new *Varna* of the Vaishnavas which would not be bound by the restricting laws of the Smritis and whose social laws would be liberal enough to admit widow re-marriage (unthinkable during those days), dissolution of marriage, and provisions for re-marriage. The Vaishnavas were nevertheless Hindus. May be Swamiji had in his mind the history of the Bengal Vaishnava experience. We see that in February 1897, Swamiji in one of his Madras lectures (The Sages of India) said this of Shri Chaitanya:

> "His (Chaitanya's) love knew no bounds. The saint or the sinner, the Hindu or the Mohammedan, the pure or the impure, the prostitute, the street-walker—all had a share in his love, all had a share in his mercy; and even to the present day, although greatly degenerated, as everything does become in time, his sect is the refuge of the poor, of the downtrodden, of the outcaste, of the weak, of those who have been rejected by all society."[3]

Shri Chaitanya's social ideas were translated into action by Shri Nityananda.

Again, the echo of the same idea can be found in another of his Madras Lectures, *The Future Of India*. He said there:

> Again, the castes are to rise slowly and slowly. There are thousands of castes, and some are even getting admission into Brahminhood, for what prevents any caste from declaring they are Brahmins?... Let us suppose that there are castes here with ten thousand people in each. If these put their heads together and say, we will call ourselves Brahmins, nothing can stop them. I have seen it in my own life. Some castes become strong, as soon as they all agree, who is to say nay? Because whatever it was, each caste was exclusive of the other.... Those powerful epoch-makers, Shankaracharya and others, were great caste-makers. I cannot tell you all the wonderful things they fabricated, and some of you may resent what I have to say. But in my travels and experiences, I have traced them out, and have arrived at most wonderful results. They would sometimes get hordes of Baluchis and at once make them Kshatriyas, and also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith. They were all Rishis and Sages and we have to bow down to their memory. So, be you all Rishis and Sages. That is the secret."[4]

Narayana Guru assumed the role of 'Rishi' in Kerala as desired by Swamiji. By "making Brahmins," Swamiji meant giving the deprived castes the highest cultural and spiritual rights. The above-quoted extract gives us only a portion of Swami's thoughts. Merely by declaring themselves as Brahmins, the non-Brahmins certainly would not be turned into Brahmins as such. The whole question was related to their getting equal rights in all spheres, educational, economic and social. Vivekananda had spoken much on these matters.

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3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* (Mayavati Memorial Edition, 1960), Vol. III, p. 266-267.
4. Ibid., p. 296.

(3)

In 1892, at the time of Swami's meeting with Dr. Palpu, Narayana Guru (1857-1928) was still merged in his sadhana or just decided to offer to the people in general, the truths of his realisation. The little bit of information that we get about his early life does not provide definite clues to dates on major things. This much we know that he was born in 1857 in Chempazhanthi, a small village, about 7 miles north of Trivandrum.

He belonged to Eazhava community. His father Madan Asan was a teacher in the village school, and his mother Kutti-ammal belonged to an important family there. The Eazhavas at that time, generally speaking, were untouchables, though they "stood first among the sub-castes of the untouchables....These people, about 19 lakhs in number, were then the professional manufacturers of liquor from coconut palms. As belonging to a higher social group of the serfs, the Eazhavas enjoyed certain privileges. They were allowed to study medicine, held a certain amount of land and wear better clothes." For this reason it was possible for Narayana Guru (his pet name was then 'Nanu') to learn something of Sanskrit, Tamil and obviously Malayalam. "After a few years Nanu was sent to a Sanskrit school at Puthupally in Karunagapally Taluk. He had good training in Grammar, logic and Vedanta philosophy." Nanu had a religious bent of mind. While in Puthupally, it is said, he saw religious visions. In 1882, he returned to his native place and founded some schools there. At the same time "he was also concerned about the deeper problems of human destiny, the relation between God and man, and the reality of existence.... He sought release from this world of Maya." His parents compelled him to marry but he refused to lead a householder's life. In 1885, after his parents' death he left his home as a pilgrim. At 29, he embraced sannyasa. Shortly afterwards he came in contact with another spiritual aspirant, a wandering monk, Kunjanapillai Asan. When they both understood that Yogic methods could not be properly followed without instruction from an experienced teacher, they approached Ayyavu Shastri, a Brahmin from Madras, staying then at a place near Trivandrum. After learning the process of Patanjali Yoga, Narayana Guru moved to a nearby hill, Maruthua Malai, and there, it is said, he attained *Yogasiddhi*, and also the state of *Jeevan-mukta*. Subsequently he led a life of *Avadhuta Parivrajaka* for a few years. On return he made Aruvippuram, a place some 15 miles north of Trivandrum, his centre for preaching the truths he had realised.

It is not exactly clear just from when Narayana Guru started his preachings in a comprehensive and organised manner. This much we know that in 1900, he started the Yogam "without any formal organisation," which he with the help of Dr. Palpu gradually made into an established institution in 1903, and Kumaran Asan became its first secretary. It is to be noted that Narayana Guru and his Sangha did not take up any important activity not only before 1892, the time of Vivekananda-Palpu talks, but even not before 1897, when Swamiji undertook his triumphal marches through the length and breadth of India. Narayana Guru was the disciple of Shri Chattampi Swami whom Swamiji met in his wandering days. Chattampi Swami held Vivekananda in high esteem. When Narayana Guru was leading his Avadhuta life, the whole of India, specially the South India, was reverberating with the thundering call of Vivekananda. India held him as the Prophet of the age. Swamiji, in his speeches in different parts of Southern India, vehemently attacked the base caste system and put forward the claims of equal oppor-

tunities for the down-trodden and the untouchables. Narayana Guru could have known all these. He could have gathered or almost surely he did gather, Vivekananda's social ideas from Dr. Palpu, the main architect of the S.N.D.P.

We shall see now how Narayana Guru's social and religious ideas and activities resembled those of Vivekananda's. Here we shall quote extracts from Daniel Thomas's booklet *Shri Narayana Guru* (1956), from which the present writer has gathered most of the information of the Guru's life. This booklet was published from the Christian Institute for the study of Religion and Society, yet its accounts are objective, sympathetic, and reverential.

The first important work the Guru undertook was the founding of temples open to all people. These he did to create self-esteem amongst the lower strata of the society. To the end of his life the Guru went on establishing temples in different parts of Kerala. "The temple represents the crown of the social structure (of Kerala). It is the fortress within which all the abominations of the past are preserved", wrote Swami Dharma Theerthan in his *Prophet of Peace* and quoted by Daniel Thomas. Only the Brahmins then had the rights to perform pujas and other ceremonial works. The low caste people had not the right even to enter the temple. Thus the attempt of the Guru in founding new temples for the lower castes, was revolutionary, and some sort of a new dispensation. Daniel Thomas wrote,

"Narayana Guru revolted against the system of temple worship and consecrated a temple at Aruvirapuram for all classes of people. This was the very first act of his public work.... He picked up a stone from the stream nearby and placed it as Shivalingam. From that day onwards the lower castes enjoyed the freedom to worship the higher gods of Hinduism. They were released from unapproachability to temples and from worship of evil spirits (which was prevalent with the Ezahavas). The event in itself was quite simple, but it shook the very foundations of the fortress of social and religious orthodoxy. When some high caste leaders questioned the authority of a low caste man to dedicate new temples, the Guru replied, 'I have consecrated not the Shiva of the Brahmins but of Ezhavas.' On the walls of that first temple the following motto was later inscribed, 'Without differences of caste, or enmities of creed, all live like brothers at heart here in this place.'

"He established more than 60 temples. These served as means of emancipation for thousands of people. He built them at different times of his ministry and according to the need of the people. Wherever and whenever people requested him to dedicate temples he readily did so; and they were open not only to Ezhavas but to all without distinction of caste or creed....

"It is very important to consider the underlying principle of Narayana Guru in establishing these temples. The first thing he adopted was to consecrate the higher gods of Hinduism in the place of the lower, satanic gods of primitive religion (which the Ezhavas generally worshipped). His idea of temple worship was somewhat different from the traditional one. As far as the Shri Vaishnava theology of the South is concerned, Ishwara, the personal God, appears in five different modes, one of which is His residence in idols and images, set up in houses or temples. Though these are made up of matters, He dwells, in them as spirit. Although Narayana Guru himself did not believe in idols and images, he did not object to the belief of the average people in them if it would result in helping them to live healthy and noble lives. Narayana Guru often taught and put into practice the principle that temples should be neat and tidy, with good airy rooms. More or less all the temples built under his guidance had gardens and reading rooms. He believed that such an atmosphere would produce in man thoughts about God, clean feelings, moral desires and freedom from mental cares and bodily weariness. Mr. John Spiers says, (in his *a Warrior Monk*, p. 7) 'His purpose was to cleanse the polluted atmosphere and to sublimate idolatry to a purer level of abstract virtues, bending social forces to serve the highest aims. Shiva was thus sanctioned as the symbol of pure beauty and truth. So by these methods he was able to lead the stream of devotion to the boundless ocean of Brahman, changeless and imperishable *Tat Tvam Asi*'.

"When we examine the whole process of his establishment of temples, we come across certain developments in his attitude to temple worship. He began his life with building temples with idols or images representing gods of popular Hinduism. in 1922, he built a temple at Murukkumpuzhai and in it he set up a plain stone containing words, *Truth*, *Charity*, *Love* and *Mercy*, in Malayalam script.... In 1924, he built another temple at Kalavankodu in Sherthalai district with a big mirror in the sanctuary instead of idols or images. Each one should worship himself because God is within man. We can understand it easily if we remember that Narayana Guru was an *Advaitin* who believed in the identity of (Jiva ?) Atman and Brahman. In the temples, which he dedicated, he starts with personal gods, then seems to emphasise the worship of abstract qualities and finally ends with the contemplation of the Self as Brahman. To the common man he continued to advocate the worship of personal God."

In many ways Narayana Guru's thoughts followed those of Vivekananda. It could be seen from similar passages of Swamiji's published speeches. When in America, Vivekananda thought of Temple Universal, and in October 1894, he evinced much eagerness about it.[5] *Indian Mirror*, then an influential daily, published on 31 January, 1895 and also on 22 August of the same year, news items on the subject. While in America Swamiji could not proceed to materialise the idea, but that idea remained with him. In Madras on 14 February 1897, he in his lecture on the *The Future of India*, explained at length about his educational ideas, how in place of negative education, positive, 'life-building, man-making, character-making'' education could be given. That task of imparting both the spiritual and secular education on "national lines" has got to be taken "in our own hands." Then he said,

"Of course this is very big scheme, a very big plan. I do not know whether it will ever work out. But we must begin the work. But how ? Take Madras, for instance. We must have a temple, for with Hindus religion must come first. Then, you may say, all sects will quarrel about it. But we will make it a non-sectarian temple, having only *Om* as the symbol, the greatest symbol of any sect. If there is any sect here, which believes that *Om* ought not to be the symbol, it has no right to call itself Hindu. All will have the right to interpret Hinduism, each one according to his own sect ideas, but we must have a common temple. Yon can have your own images and symbols in other places, but do not quarrel here with those who differ from you. Here should be taught the common grounds of our different sects, and at the same time the different sects should have perfect liberty to come and teach their doctrines, with only one restriction, that is, not to quarrel with other sects. Say, what you have to say, the world wants it; but the world has no time to hear what you think about other people. You can keep that to yourselves.

"Secondly, in connection with this temple there should be an institution to train teachers who must go about preaching religion and giving secular education to our people; they must carry both. As we have been already carrying religion from door to door, let us along with it carry secular education also. That can be easily done. Then the work will extend through these bands of teachers and preachers, and gradually we shall have similar temples in other places, until we have covered the whole of India."[6]

Of course the dimension of Swamiji's idea was bigger and more comprehensive, but it includes Narayana Guru's scheme as well. Particularly the Omkar Temples which would be open to all, and their adjoining teachers' training institutions, remind us of Narayana Guru's libraries attached to his temples. Also it is worth while to remember here Swamiji's ideas about sannyasins and other dedicated persons going to villages, constructing temple-huts, and imparting both religious and secular education to all including the pariahs. This idea Swamiji had expressed in many places.

Though imbued with deep philosophic ideas, Narayana Guru, at the time of prea-

5. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, Vol. III, p. 368.

6. *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 302-303.

ching, did not indulge in subtle intricacies of philosophy. Instead, he propounded easily understandable religious and social ideas. Just about a year before his death the Guru gave his last message of 'One Caste, One Religion, One God'. We do not want here to quote the all-time great words of Vivekananda on the Universal Religion, but for specific purpose let me quote from two of his letters. On 9 April 1894, he wrote to Alasinga,

"I believe that the *Satya Yuga* will come when there will be one caste, one Veda and peace and harmony."[7]

On 21 March 1895, he wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull,

"My Master (Shri Ramakrishna) used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian etc., stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers and now only stand as baneful influences under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed."[8]

Narayana Guru was himself a Shankarite Advaitin, but as regards the material world and the Maya, he somewhat mellowed the uncompromising stand of Shankara. Like Vivekananda he thought that Advaitavada could be aplied to daily life and social needs. "To him (Narayana Guru) speculative metaphysics and practical religion were not different in essence but only in form."[9] Here comes Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta, of which he was the pioneer and most powerful exponent.

Disciples like Dr. Natarajan and others, after establishing Gurukula Ashramas, laid stress on the Guru's Advaita philosophy and wanted to present him more as a religious teacher than a social reformer. On the other hand the S.N.D.P. movement emphasised his social role and ventured to depict him as the foremost social reformer of Kerala. The Guru's social reform activities include (a) Abolition of evil customs like some costly ceremonies connected with marriage, which made the families at times pauper, (b) Abolition of the evil of drinking, (c) Abolition of caste-restrictions. On the last count, it has been said, "the Guru led the foundation for a total social revolution."[10] Not only the Eazhavas but the whole of the Hindu society of Kerala were influenced directly or indirectly by him on this issue. It is true, "Very little change was brought about during his life-time. But his work has helped in many ways to release forces which eventually contributed to the removal of untouchability and other barriers of caste. He brought a sense of human rights to the Eazhavas and an awakening of a sense of social brotherhood to many Nair leaders."

The methods the Guru adopted for these reforms were practically a follow-up of Vivekananda's thoughts. They were, (1) Organisation, (2) Education, (3) Industrial development. "The revered Shri Narayana Guru Swami", wrote P. Seshadri in his article *Swami Vivekananda in Kerala* in the Vivekananda Centenary Volume, Trichur, 1963, "remarked in course of a conversation with Shri Nilakantha Tirthapada, 'Vivekananda Swami's teachings are laudable in all respects'."

In assessing Narayana Guru's historic role it has been said,

"Sri Narayana Guru awakened the Eazhava community and brought about many great changes in the life and thought of the Hindu society in Kerala. In fact, he has brought Kerala into the stream of national awakening in India."[11]

If this be true then we can well surmise what far-reaching results were produced

7. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 31.
8. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 303.
9. Daniel Thomas, p. 25.
10. Ibid., p. 33.
11. Ibid., p. 42.

from the meeting of Vivekananda and Dr. Palpu. Here we find one of the many instances of Swamiji's deep and wide influence on Indian social life, which has silently worked through many great souls bringing revolutionary uplift of the masses.

(4)

Though extraordinary was Narayana Guru's role, yet he was not alone in the field, not even the precursor of the reform or revolt movement. The Christian missionaries took every opportunity to attack untouchability and in their hours of triumphs they were able to increase numbers in their fold by conversions. Keshavan Pandit and some others like him were propagating against caste evils but their efforts were not organised.

"Also there were two highly educated men of this community. Dr. Palpu, a Dewan of Mysore State and Rao Bahadur P. Velayudan, an officer in the British service—who through their influence awakened the people from their deep sleep of ignorance."[12]

(*To be continued*)

12. Ibid., p. 30.

Dr. Palpu remained a friend and co-operator of the Ramakrishna Mission. In March 1901, "a few admirers of Shri Swami Vivekananda being desirous of having a religious institution under the guidance of the Ramakrishna Mission started an organisation known as the Vedanta Society, with his direct blessings." One of the Vice-Presidents of the Society was "Dr. P. Palpu, L.M.S., D.P.H., F.R.I.P.H. (Cantab), Health Officer, Bangalore City, and subsequently Sanitary Commissioner to the Govt. Of Mysore." (*Mysore and the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Movement*, Bangalore, 1935).

A PALACE FOR THE POOR: A TEMPLE OF LEARNING

(Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras)
(Illustrated)

SWAMI PITAMBARANANDA

Shri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home at Madras, an affiliated branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, is the direct outcome of the message of service to the poor and destitutes, in the field of education, with a view to helping the manifestation of the Divine in man. It was started under the guidance and inspiration of Srimat Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj, one of the direct disciples of the Master, who was sent as the apostle to South India by the great leader Swami Vivekananda.

After starting the Ramakrishna Math in Madras in 1899, Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj surveyed the needs of the people and thought of an orphanage where orphan and destitute boys could be educated under the Gurukula system and put on their legs as properly oriented and useful members of society. At his behest, the cousins, Shri C. Ramaswami Iyenger and Shri C. Ramanujachariar started the "Home", nurtured it, and built it up. The "Home" was inaugurated on the 17th February, 1905, in a small house in the Kesava Perumal, South Mada Street, Mylapore, given free of rent by Dr. M. C. Nanjunda Rao. It had then 5 orphans to take care of. It was afterwards shifted from one rented house to another to accommodate more and more boys. When Swami Ramakrishnananda died in 1911, Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Shri Ramakrishna took over the mantle of

guiding and inspiring the activities of the Home. In 1916 some land was obtained in Mylapore itself and he laid the foundation stone of the new buildings on the *Akshaya Tritiya* in May 1918. Again he himself inaugurated the new building when the Home was brought to its own permanent site, on Akshaya Tritiya, the 10th May, 1921, of which the present postal address is 101 Sir P.S. Sivaswami Salai, Mylapore, Madras 600 004.

In the beginning the object was to provide a home for destitutes and orphans giving them free board and lodging and at the same time to secure for them general supervision in their education, conduct and regulation of life. But for a fuller realisation of the Gurukula ideal, a Residential High School was started in 1922. Vocational training was also started immediately which now has taken the form of a fully developed residential Technical Institute. An Elementary School for the children of the locality was also opened in 1936. Some land was received as gift at Malliankaranai Village in Chingleput District and the educational activities were extended to the village level with a Higher Elementary School started there in 1945 and an attached hostel started in 1947.

Today the Students' Home has under its management six sections: The Collegiate, the Technical, the Secondary and the Elementary education at Mylapore, Madras, and the Higher Elementary education at Malliankaranai Village (Uttiramerur Taluk, 603 406, Chingleput District), as well as the Agricultural Estate in Malliankaranai.

(1) THE COLLEGIATE SECTION: The "Home" provides only free lodging and boarding and the boys study in different colleges or (2) courses in the city. Present strength: 30.

(2) THE TECHNICAL SECTION: The "Home" runs the Ramakrishna Mission Technical Institute which is fully residential for 3 years' Diploma course. Present strength 126. The Technical Institute also conducts a part-time P.D. Course and A.M.I.E. classes having a combined strength of 46.

(3) THE SECONDARY SECTION: The "Home" runs the Ramakrishna Mission Residential High School for boys from standards VI to X. Present strength: 175.

(4) THE ELEMENTARY SECTION: The "Home" runs the Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School for day scholars only. Present strength: 359.

(5) THE HIGHER ELEMENTARY SECTION: The "Home" runs the Ramakrishna Mission Middle School at Malliankaranai. Present strength: 424. Number of boys in the attached Hostel: 44.

Thus the total number of free boarders is 375 and the combined strength of the Students in various educational Institutions, is 1130.

(6) AGRICULTURAL ESTATE AT MALLIANKARANAI: The Students' Home owns some agricultural land and cattle heads in this village.

The Home, besides giving an up-to-date education, bestows special attention upon character-building, emphasis being on a harmonious development of body, mind, intellect and heart.

PUJA, PRAYERS AND RELIGIOUS CLASSES: The Home has separate Shrine Halls for the juniors and seniors where Puja is done by the students themselves both morning and evening. In the morning boys are taught the Bhagavadgita and Vedic chanting with explanations; devotional songs are sung and a silent meditation ends the programme. In the evening there is Arati with songs and meditation. Religious classes are conducted for the boys both morning and evening. In the month of Margazhi (December-January) Bhajans are

conducted every morning with singing of Tiruppavai and Tiruvembavai.

Birth Anniversary of Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna, Shri Sarada Devi, Swami Ramakrishnananda and other festivals are celebrated with processions, cultural programmes, and meetings, etc.

All the inmates of the Home are under the care of monastic warden and lay wardmasters. Three staff members of the High School and eight of the Technical Institute are provided with residential accommodation in the Staff Quarters opposite to the Home.

Classwise and overall competitions are held for both Junior and Senior wings in Oratory, Recitation, Extempore Speech, General Essay writing, Religious Essays on the Gita, Tirukkural etc. and general knowledge in English and Tamil, as also in pencil-drawing and colour-drawing. Competitions are also held in chanting the Vedas, the Gita, the Vishnusahasranamam, the Kambaramayana, etc.

Almost all the domestic activities of the Home are carried out by the boys themselves under their respective captains allotted by the wardens. Special duties e.g. maintenance of electrical installations and water pumps, carpentry, vegetable gardening and flower gardening, etc., give ample scope for training of boys with special aptitudes. Serving in the dining hall is another very useful training activity. Stationery Stores for all inmates are also being managed by the boys.

Physical exercises are taught and conducted daily for all inmates of the Home in the early morning between 5 and 5.30 a.m. Gymnastics and outdoor sports are also provided for. A qualified doctor and a compounder visit the Home every day between 5 and 6 p.m. and boys requiring observation and rest are kept in the Medical Ward.

The Home organises Film Shows for the boys for inculcating spiritual and moral values.

Excursions are arranged classwise to places of religious interest, natural beauty, and industrial development.

In 1932 a gift of about 200 acres of land in this Malliankaranai Village (about 85 Kms. away from Madras) was received by the Students' Home with the idea that the income derived from paddy grown here could be used for supporting the students in Mylapore, Madras.

However when the Mission workers took over this place, the first thing noticed by them was the backwardness of this remote place with no educational or any other facilities whatsoever and hence as per the ideals of the Students' Home educational activities were started here though there was considerable expenditure involved in the process. It was also noticed that the land was highly alkaline and hence unfit for good agriculture. However, the Students' Home workers over a number of years have tried to improve the agricultural produce, the educational facilities, and the overall condition of the villagers. Thus today one can see here:

(1) A School with more than 400 Children housed in a pucca stone building with shrine and prayer hall of its own.

(2) Extension of the Home in the form of free board and lodging to 45 students.

(3) Agricultural pattern changed to long term investments like: 1200 coconut trees, Mango, Tamarind and Guava trees, Casurina groves; along with Paddy cultivation and Vegetable garden.

(4) Mechanisation by digging several wells and installation of pumpsets, windmills, bio-gas plants, etc.

(5) Dairy products for consumption and marketing in future.

Almost all the students who are admitted to the Students' Home are from the lowest rung of society, either due to their orphanhood or due to extreme poverty, and also,

in most cases, due to the backwardness of their family background. And yet they are made to forget all these and encouraged to strive to gain the highest in life, in various fields for which they possess the required potential.

Swami Brahmananda declared the Students' Home to be the "Palace for the poor" and "a temple of learning" on the day of inauguration of the new buildings in 1921. True to that spirit, the heights reached by the old boys of this Home in various fields in the last 83 years since its inception in 1905, are too numerous to mention. A few of these students turned into outstanding monks of the Ramakrishna Order, and other Maths.

Anna N. Subramanian who came to the Home as a college student, and now the President of the Home, has authored the Tamil translations of almost all scriptural books published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

One student of this Home who earned Padmabhushan is Dr. T. R. Seshadri (1917-24). Two others were awarded Padmashri, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, and Shri O.S. Murthy. Besides this, the Home students have turned out to be distinguished scientists and scholars like Dr. V.S. Swaminathan (1919-23), Dr. A. Appadurai (1921-23) and others.

The Home has contributed high ranking officers of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, the highest rank being that of Major General S.P. Mahadevan (1939-40) who retired as G.O.C. in C., Southern Command and then was made the Chairman of Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission.

Many distinguished I.C.S., I.A.S. and other officers have come out of this Home. In the field of politics Shri N.M. Lingam, a student of this Home from 1929 to 1934 was elected to the Indian Parliament in 1952. Very prominent in the field of Law was Shri V. Rajaram Iyer (1912-1913) who retired as Advocate General, Hyderabad State.

These are only a few names out of hundreds of successful lawyers, administrators, engineers, and other distinguished citizens of India who were blessed with the grace of Shri Ramakrishna and His holy followers in this 'Palace of the poor', which is also a 'temple of learning.'

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA DARSHANAM

(A Pictorial Museum at Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad)

SWAMI PARAMARTHANANDA

(A conversation between the author and the well-known surgeon of Hyderabad, Dr. Ramesh Pai)

Swami: Dr. Pai, this evening, we have the inauguration of Shri Ramakrishna Darshanam by Revered Tapasyanandaji Maharaj, to which I hope you have received the invitation.

Dr. Pai: Swamiji, I will certainly be attending the evening function. I feel the project has come up very quickly. When was it actually started ?

Swami: Yes, through the grace of Shri

Ramakrishna and the able guidance and leadership of Swami Ranganathanandaji, we have been able to complete the project within a short time. The inspiration behind the project was a similar exhibition at the Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur, Howrah, under the guidance of Swami Smaranananda ji. The foundation of this museum was laid on Shri Ramakrishna's birthday in 1986 by Revered Ranganathanandaji.

Dr. Pai: What is the total expenditure on the project, Swamiji ?

Swami: Including the building of about 3,020 sq. ft. carpet area, the exhibits, furniture and equipment, it has come to nearly Rs. 11 lakhs. Many friends and donors came forward with their generous contributions, including a handsome grant of Rs. one lakh from the National Museum, Government of India, New Delhi.

Dr. Pai: Swamiji, what is the purpose of this museum ? No doubt, it has enhanced the importance and beauty of the premises of the Ramakrishna Math.

Swami: In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "It is a remarkable phenomenon that in Shri Ramakrishna there has been an assemblage of ideas deeper than the sea and vaster than the skies. Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of the utmost Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma has never before appeared among mankind." With this as the theme, the designers, Shri Raghunatha Goswami and his associates of Calcutta, involved in visualising, and preparing this exhibition, have tried to awaken an understading about the marvellous life and mission of Shri Ramakrishna. This exposition should offer persuasive proof that a visualised biographical survey can do more than mere information from books. An exposition of this nature can emotionally involve a visitor with the profound life and message of the personalities projected. It should enlarge our understanding regarding Shri Ramakrishna and should help us to enter into the spirit of this great life in a better way. This exposition is different from the usual kind of biographical exposition, where only facts and figures concerning the subject are of prime importance. Here in this museum, efforts are made to make people aware of the other aspect of the life story of Shri Ramakrishna, his high ideals and great spiritual experiences of a very high order. As Romain Rolland has said in his book, *The Life of Ramakrishna*: "The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of 2000 years of the spiritual life of 300 million people. Although he has been dead 40 years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art of thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village brahmin of Bengal whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time, but his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and gods." The inner life of Shri Ramakrishna is the focal point of this exposition. This should have a meditative quality. Each detail has been very carefully chosen by Swami Ranganathanandaji and Shri Raghunatha Goswami so as to contribute more than a mere survey of history. For, Shri Ramakrishna's life goes far beyond mere historical facts. This exposition is an attempt to probe deeply into the message of Shri Ramakrishna. The story of this great personality unfolds before our eyes, condensed, and, more often, astounding. It is very interesting to note that Shri Ramakrishna was perhaps the only incarnation who was photographed. Today, none need imagine how he looked. His photos are available for all to see. Moreover, many places and persons connected with his life have been photographed at different times. Thanks to the modern technology, we have thus accurate aids for reconstructing the life and message of Shri Ramakrishna.

Dr. Pai: Swamiji, it is a great boon of modern technology that we have been able to photographically re-capture the historic past, when Shri Ramakrishna lived and moved.

Swami: Yes, Doctor, you are right. The existing photographs of Shri Ramakrishna himself, the places associated with and visited by him, his disciples and personalities who came in contact with him, and relevant documents, form the main material of this exposition. You will be interested to know that a few hand-drawn sketches depicting some episodes in the life of Shri Ramakrishna by the famous Nanda Lal Bose have been included in the Museum, which enhance the worth of this exposition. The photographs alone may not be sufficient to present a visualised life-story of Shri Ramakrishna effectively. A wholeness has been achieved through a combination of photos and paintings. There is a written narration of all the exhibits both in English and Telugu which contribute to a better and clearer understanding of the exhibits.

Dr. Pai: How are these exhibits classified, Swamiji ?

Swami: There are several sections dealing with various facets of Shri Ramakrishna's life and message.

(1) Main visuals representing images, photographs and documents, create an atmosphere of authenticity ;

(2) Imaginary pictures and paintings, prepared on the basis of authentic written descriptions, suggest particular scenes and situations from the life of Shri Ramakrishna. This will help to fill up the gaps and bring a sense of continuity in the visualised life-story of Shri Ramakrishna.

Dr. Pai: Swamiji, I shall be thankful if you can take me to the museum and in a guided way explain the important exhibits. Should I buy any ticket ?

Swami: Not at all. There is no charge for admission. It is open to all except children below 10 years. Please come. Let us go.

Dr. Pai: This ramp is a very thoughtful idea, Swamiji.

Swami: Yes. We do not want to deny entrance to anyone, including the physically disabled. That is why we have made this ramp for going up. Now we are entering the museum. All the exhibits have been arranged in a *Mandala* pattern instead of the usual linear arrangements. The exhibits have been divided into various sections. First, we shall enter the *Childhood and Boyhood* section of Shri Ramakrishna's life. This section contains various facets of Shri Ramakrishna's birthplace—Kamarpukur, and several other places and persons connected with Shri Ramakrishna's childhood and boyhood. Then we come to the *States of longing* when Shri Ramakrishna engaged himself in intense spiritual *sadhana* at Dakshineshwar, culminating in the vision of the Divine Mother. Next, we are entering the section where Shri Ramakrishna's marriage with *Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi* and other places connected with the Holy Mother are exhibited. Let us now proceed to his various other *sadhanas*, where several modes of his *sadhana* are depicted. Next, we come to the *Pilgrimage* section. The various places and persons Shri Ramakrishna visited and met, we find in this section. Proceeding further, we come across the various great personalities who met Shri Ramakrishna and the places sanctified by him in the *Blessed City* of Calcutta. The next section is *Bloom invites the Bees*, we find here various photographs and pictures of Shri Ramakrishna's monastic as well as householder disciples, who were all attracted by the great life of Shri Ramakrishna. This section culminates in the arrival of *Narendranath*, the future Swami Vivekananda. At the end of the Museum, we have

a section of Shri Ramakrishna's entering the *Lap of Eternity*, a section on the Holy Mother, and a section where the *Message* depicted in his enchanting tales and parables are given in colour paintings. Finally, we see the section dealing with *Message that Spreads* throughout India and abroad, and the *World Homage* by great savants like Prof. Max Muller, Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland, Arnold Toynbee, Shri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, etc.

Dr. Pai: What a great education, Swamiji, is this Museum to us! No one need explain the exhibits since all the photos etc. have narrations both in English and Telugu. If one goes round the Museum, one should come out much enlightened about the great personality, Shri Ramakrishna. But I find there is still some space left in the hall. What do you propose to do there, Swamiji ?

Swami: Thanks for your question. This forms the second phase of our project. Work has already commenced on it. This will exhibit the different aspects of *India's Spiritual Heritage* and the *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement*.

Dr. Pai: What forms the main theme of this second phase, which is yet to open ?

Swami: India's spiritual heritage will start at the entrance of the Museum with the Indus-Valley civilisation proceeding further with the Vedic civilisation, culture, the dawn of Indian philosophy, the great Upanishadic sages like Nachiketa, King Janaka, and the great epic age which highlights the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Then comes the spiritual awakening between 600 B.C. and 300 A.D., the rise of the Bhagavata religion, Jainism, Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka, Tiruvalluvar, etc., culminating in the development of science in ancient India followed by India in the medieval age, foreign invasions, spread of Christianity and Islam, etc.

The second part on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement will exhibit the numerous activities being carried on by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda centres not only in India, but in various other parts of the world in educational, cultural, humanitarian, and spiritual fields. We hope that a visitor to the Museum will enrich himself with the great culture of India once he enters the Museum with an open mind, and come out of it with a broader vision. This is the contribution of Shri Ramakrishna to the modern age. This second phase is expected to be completed by December 1988.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND WAR-TORN WORLD

NINA STARK

Although Vivekananda did not live to see the two World Wars and the possibility of another when he passed through Europe on his way back to India in 1895, he sensed then that all Europe was becoming an armed camp and "smelled" of war. In one of his talks after his triumphal return to India, he said: "We can teach the world only what it is waiting for. The whole of Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and prefectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces."

In Madras, he gave a rousing call to his countrymen to rise up and conquer the world with spirituality, with life-giving principles. "It has been declared on this soil first, love must conquer hatred, hatred cannot conquer itself....Armies when they attempt to conquer armies only multiply and make brutes of humanity. Spirituality must conquer the West... without it the world will be destroyed."

In providing for "the common defense" America now leads the world in magnitude of military preparedness. So great is the cost, so fateful the weapons, and so extensive and pervasive is the effect of the military on the life of the country that time has come for, in the words of Einstein, "a substantially new manner of thinking, if mankind is to survive."

Given the scope and power of destructiveness of atomic weaponry, many have come to the conclusion that the "enemy" is war itself. We have reached the point in history when, as President Kennedy said, man must end war or war will end mankind. In the relative world, there is no question but that we have reached a fateful stage. As one of our first Astronauts observed: "I looked down on this little garden of earth and I saw the unity of all things and I wondered why, since our problems are man-made, they can't be man-solved. Why must we blow up this beautiful planet ?"

To the most thoughtful, the enemy is ourselves. It is here, within each one of us, that the issues of war and peace are both generated and resolved. In a letter to Mary Hale, Vivekananda wrote that "until one is spiritual, that is, until one has got real insight into the nature of one's own soul and has got a glimpse of the world of the soul, one cannot distinguish chaff from seed, tall talk from depth..." and therefore we will always be confused and bemused by the rhetoric of the immediate and the partisan and by the reactions to the unexamined passions of our own natures. We may work actively for peace, join marches, write bulletins, but if we have not conquered our own inner restlessness, our passions, our hasty judgements, we have done nothing but add to the actions and reactions that create dissension, disunity, and, given the enormity of preparedness for war, eventual war.

True peace must be found within ourselves, the peace of a calm awareness of the unity of life which frees us to radiate non-reaction and love for all that exists. If you say, "But it is too late, even if I change ; the world could blow up meanwhile," you do not realise the power locked within you, that it is the only way for you to go no matter what the outer circumstances. What can you lose ? Nothing. What can you gain ? Perspective and peace of mind.

Before discussion on other aspects of Vivekananda's message relative to turning within ourselves to find the key to life and peace, we would like to point out that America's greatest challenge today is to question and reassess her military's national purpose. We must ask ourselves, "Where are we now, in reality ?" As a world power, our stance and our action affect everyone, everywhere. It is a position that calls for the deepest and most wrenching self-analysis, both personally and collectively.

As Americans, our first responsibility is to look at ourselves, not at others, not at the Russians (whom we project today as the 'enemy'). What are *we* doing now ? How are *we* thinking ? Einstein said that the splitting of the atom changed everything—except man's way of thinking. If we look carefully and dispassionately at our foreign policy stance, at our arms build-up, at our priorities and our purposes, we can only conclude that, for the time, we are in a state of insanity. There may be a reason ; we may have to reach the nadir of unexamined stances and policies before the power of the still-sane portion of society is aroused

to action, before the majority of Americans realise that our condition is not a state of human frailty forgiven by custom ("It's always been like this, and always will be") but a vast pathology that is self-destructive. To all intents and purposes, our government is putting a higher value on national sovereignty than on human life, and this can only be termed as self-destructive, and therefore insane.

Recently, the Vice-President was in the process of urging the United States Senate to approve the manufacture of more nuclear missiles in order to "assure the success of the arms reduction talks" when a man in the chamber audience was led away crying out, "When will we have enough nuclear weapons ?" Who was sane ? *Audubon Action* of December, 1984, noted: "The Department of Energy is paying a psychiatrist 85,000 to find out if people who oppose nuclear power are suffering from irrational fear. The psychiatrist, Robert L. Dupont is President of the Phobia Society of America and has characterised antinuclear activities as 'phobia inducers infecting the populace with mental illness.' " Who is sane ? Adolph Eichmann, Nazi supervisor of the extermination camp program, was examined at his trial by a psychiatrist and found to be perfectly sane. He was a good father and husband, a model citizen of his State, unimaginative, with great respect for law and order, not bothered by guilt ; he ate well, slept well, and was only slightly disturbed when he visited Auschwitz. Who is sane ?

Thomas Merton writes that "the sanity of Eichmann is disturbing. We equate sanity with a sense of justice, with prudence, with the capacity to love and understand other people. We rely on the sane people of the world to preserve it from barbarism, madness, destruction. And now it begins to dawn on us that it is precisely the *sane ones* who are the most dangerous." Merton is concerned that we generally assume that because a man is adjudged "Sane", he is therefore in his "right mind". He concludes that "the whole concept of sanity in a society where spiritual values have lost their meaning is itself meaningless."

Huston Smith tells the story of the American named Joe who had the finest, fleeciest lamb in all of America ; a lamb so famous that some people decided to come and steal it. "When he saw them coming, Joe carried the lamb into his cabin and barred the door. He began shooting at the robbers, first from the window on the East, then from the window on the West, then from the East again. But each time he crossed the room, he tripped and fell over the lamb. Finally he opened the door, kicked the lamb outside, and went on fighting."

E.P. Thompson writes that "Weapons innovation is self-generating and independent of the ebb and flow of international diplomacy. Weapons for the year 2000 are now at R. and D. (research and development)." Weapons research in Russia and the U.S. originate in bureaucratic decisions, not in the play of market forces ; the State is the customer and can guarantee high profit return which is passed on to the taxpayer. Thompson calls it a policy or "exterminism," or those characteristics of a society which go in the direction of extermination of multitudes. This will not be accidental but the direct result of a prior policy and he warns, "The immediate cause of World War III is the preparation for it."[1]

Herman Wouk (Winds of War), in a recent article, declared that "War, and the preparation for war is the primal curse now afflicting the human race." After a tour of U.S. military establishments, he wrote: "First of all, we are trapped in a monstrous and incredibly frightening closed loop of

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1. Just before the "war" in Viet Nam there were defense plants in 363 out of the 435 Congressional Districts, or 5/6 of the total. (Barbara Tuchman, *Practicing History*)

insanity with the Soviet Union. The build-up and counter build-up of destructive weapons, described in calm voices by 30-year-old officers with pointers or slides, are more chilling than any variation of Dr. Strangelove fantasy. Possibly the most gruesome thing is that everybody has come to take the whole lunacy for granted."

This insanity is largely responsible for a $ 200 billion dollar deficit because of our defense budget, *in spite of the fact* that there is no defense in nuclear war.

President Eisenhower, later in life, saw this trend and warned of the growing military-industrial complex. As long ago as 1960, a House Committee report revealed "a steady flow of retired high-level military personnel into defense contractor employment."[2] In the 25 years since then, the trend has augmented rather than reversed and the power of those who depend on preparation for war has reached stranglehold proportions.

It was a cold, misting, grey day in December in Paris when we took the Metro to the headquarters of Radio Bleu, beamed to the elderly in France. A friend, who worked at the station, had invited us to participate in a program involving a Children's Crusade for peace organised by an Englishman living in France. The children who were there that day had recently made a record about peace with Yves Montand, popular French singer, which was enjoying wide success. Radio Bleu was hooked up to Moscow where two young Russians, who spoke French, were in the studio with the Englishmen. At first, the program was given over to the singing of the song. Then we were asked to say something, and one of us repeated the last words of Holy Mother: "Si vous desirez la paix de l'esprit... ("If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own...") When we had finished, the Englishman from Moscow replied, "Yes, I couldn't agree more but with the American build-up of nuclear power, we have to be practical rather than philosophical." We were not called upon to speak again, nor, outside of the children and our friend, did anyone else speak to us the whole time we were there. But what touched us more than anything else in this program was listening to the two Russian youngsters. They both explained that they had lost their grandparents in the war, and when asked what they thought about America, they replied, "We are afraid." Tears came to our eyes ; they were afraid of *us*. We wanted to interrupt the program to say, "Let us be your grandparents," but the wind-up of the allotted time rolled over us as the frantic hand-signals behind the glass called for a fade-out. We felt cut off. We wanted to talk to them. We can still hear today in our hearts those young voices, "We are afraid."

(*To be concluded*)

2. Robert Engler, *The Warfare Society.*

VIVEKANANDA SOCIETY IN MOSCOW

(*A Soviet Academician Speaks on Vivekananda*)

SWAMI PURNATMANANDA

In 1988, the 125th anniversary year of the birth of Swami Vivekananda, the Soviet admirers of the prophet and world-mover, finally founded a 'Vivekananda Society' in Moscow, on 27 June of 1988. When this organisation was ceremonially declared open in the famous 'House of friendship' in Moscow, Swami Lokeswarananda, a senior Monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who had been inspiring and helping the Soviet-Vivek-

anandists by his recurring visits to Russia, was present on the occasion. Dr. E.P. Chelishev, whose deep and extensive studies on Vivekananda for the last 25 years have drawn many more Soviet scholars and academicians to the ideas of Vivekananda, has been made its first president. In his address on this historic occasion Dr. Chelishev said, "This day is a red letter day in my life. For long I have been cherishing to see Vivekananda Society in the soil of the Soviet Union. Today my life's dream gets fulfilled and I see this with my own eyes." Incidentally this dream was fulfilled when the world was celebrating 125th Birth Anniversary of Swamiji.

Dr. E.P. Chelishev is a most celebrated Soviet Academician of today. An 'Academician' is considered to be one of the topmost intellectuals in the U.S.S.R. He is not only held in the highest esteem in the academic circles, but enjoys very important position politically also. In 1983 when Dr. Chelishev visited India and stayed for some time at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, he made a request to the present writer, "Can you help me in getting a statuette of Vivekananda ? I have heard that such are available in Calcutta. I shall keep that on the table of my room in Moscow." The latter said: "I shall try to. But what will you do with that statuette ?" Dr. Chelishev answered with great emotion: "I have profound admiration for this great man. Whenever I see his photograph, I see his eyes, I feel inspired, I feel great power working within me. I become bolder, I become stronger. He is a full man, a born rebel, a valiant warrior, a real hero. And when I go through his works, his speeches, his letters, I get electrified, I get charged and re-charged. To me Vivekananda stands for manliness, for strength, for courage and for warring spirit."

"How did you get interested in Vivekananda ?" was the question I naturally put to him. He said: "O, that is a history." Dr. Chelishev then narrated a real adventure which he undertook about thirty years ago inspired by an incident in Swami Vivekananda's life. This episode has also been narrated by Dr. Chelishev in his article in 'Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume' published from Calcutta. He continued: "It was a day in the autumn of 1956. I happened to be on Cape Comorin, the Southern-most point of India. Standing on its rocky coast, where the waves of the three seas meet, we were greatly fortunate to behold a wonderful spectacle—the birth of a new day. The first rays of the morning sun rising from the ocean gilded the dome-shaped peak and the columns of the Kanya Kumari temple. Some 200 metres south from the shore there stood a lonely rock against which waves after waves were beating with great noise. "The rock of Swami Vivekananda", a local young man told me. He was standing nearby. On hearing the name of Vivekananda I drew close to him. I was acquainted with the name of Vivekananda and his fascinating life while I was a student. I came to know about him from his biography by Romain Rolland. The young man went on telling: "It was on this very rock that Swami Vivekananda had spent three days before he left India for distant foreign lands. He didn't have a single farthing with him to hire even a small boat. The penniless monk swam to that rock. He sat there on the top of the rock and got immersed in deep meditation. No, it was not in the thought of God—but in the thought of India, in the thought of regeneration of India that Vivekananda plunged into the sea." I told him at once: "How I would long to go to that islet." "Wait a little. Let me get a boat from the fisherman," the young man said and left hurriedly in search of a boat. But my eagerness to reach the Vivekananda rock was so intense that I didn't have any patience to wait till the young man's return.

I decided to swim to the rock as did Vivekananda himself. The tumultuous waves were roaring. But I was so impatient that I could not think any more. I jumped into the sea.

"When I crossed about half the way, I looked back and found a fishing boat. The young man was standing on it. He was shouting something and waiving his right hand. But the wind was blowing off his words only to the opposite direction. Neither I could catch the import of the signs he was trying to convey to me. However, we reached the islet almost simultaneously and climbed up to the top of it along the ledge. "You took great risk, sir. It is dangerous to swim here. Besides the violent waves, there are ferocious sharks," my young friend remarked. He then sat on a rock and said: "Sit here and think of him who showed us the way to a new life." I followed his advice. There was no other sound except the roaring rumbles of the foaming seas.

"Whatever I read about Vivekananda came to mind. I recalled those words of Rabindra Nath Tagore that if anyone wanted to know India, he must study Vivekananda; that Vivekananda awakened in the youth of India a burning love and adoration for the motherland, a sense of pride about their past heritage, and hopes for a brighter future. This was indeed so. I read and re-read the works of Vivekananda and everytime I find in them something new that helps me to understand India deeper and deeper, to understand the dimensions of her various philosophies and her way of life in greater detail, to get acquainted with the manners and customs of her people in the past and the present, and to know their hopes and aspirations of the future."

"Perhaps on this very lonely rock located at the foot of India Vivekananda uttered: 'The sun of valour has risen; my motherland will be awakened and there is no power under the sun that can resist the process. India will never succumb to slumber again.' This was not his fancy. These were not simple words. They constituted what may be called a Grand Message.

"I thought and thought of his life from that day onwards. That actually marked the beginning of my interest in him. The more I think of him, the stronger I become in spirit; the more I see him in his photograph, the more I get charged in the depths of my psyche."

During the same interview the Soviet scholar said: "I am very fond of Vivekananda's writings. I like them very much. They are not only my favourite; the name of Vivekanada is very popular in Soviet Russia for a fairly long time. There are many like me in Soviet Russia who love Vivekananda and like his works. How lucid and yet how powerful his words are. And what profound sympathy for man! Although pronounced over ninety years ago, his words sound equally forceful and equally inspiring till to this day. The interest and curiosity to know more about Vivekananda is only on the increase among my countrymen. We, the Soviet people, feel that Vivekananda's thoughts, his message and works are not only the treasures of India, but of the whole world as well."

"Being a Marxist don't you find it difficult to appreciate Vivekananda, a monk and a religious leader?" Hardly had the present writer finished his question when the Soviet Academician remarked: "Yes, I am a Marxist and I have already mentioned the attitude of the Soviet people towards Vivekananda. A communist should well understand and then analyse the real situation of a country. If there is a natural religious sentiment prevalent in the vast population of a given country, it should be given due consideration. A true communist should understand that just as religion can be an instrument of communal dissension in the hands of the reactionaries, a proper

religious consciousness, on the other hand, can also inspire people to strive for doing good and being good. Really speaking, religion has two aspects, one positive and the other negative. Vivekananda chose the positive aspect of religion and tried to apply it in the process of uplifting his country and his people. The negative aspect of religion gives birth to fanatic communalism, and serves as an instrument in creating and enhancing conflict and disunity between man and man. Not only in his concept of religion, but nowhere in his plan of things and in his thoughts and actions there was ever any place for negative approach. Rabindra Nath Tagore has also categorically pointed out this aspect of Vivekananda and his works. That is why we do not consider Vivekananda and his mentor Ramakrishna Paramahamsa to be mere religious leaders as they are commonly looked upon. They are far greater than that. They are prophets of human emancipation, of equality and of human progress. When Ramakrishna says: "There is no religion in an empty stomach", or when Vivekananda says: "I do not believe in that God or in that religion that cannot wipe out the tears of a widow or cannot give bread to a hungry mouth", or "the only God I believe in is he whom the ignorant call 'man'," I sincerely feel that the philosophy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the Dialectical Materialism of Karl Marx have come very close to each other."

I then put another straight question to Dr. Chelishev: "Do you think that the philosophy and message of Vivekananda has got anything to contribute to the present world-predicament ?"

Dr. Chelishev answered with great conviction: "O yes. Today when the whole world is threatened with the devastating nuclear war and the human civilisation is standing at the threshold of an utter disaster the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda message has offered a very effective solution. Incidentally, the people of Soviet Russia consider the message of Ramakrishna and that of Vivekananda as really one and inseparable.

"During the Second World War I was a navigating officer in a bomber squadron of the Soviet Army. I have seen with my own eyes all the horrors of the war. If the Third World War begins, it will be a thousand times more dreadful than the previous one. In the Second World War twenty lakh people died in Soviet Russia alone. There is hardly any family in the U.S.S.R. which has escaped the wrath and vengeance of the Great War. There is hardly any family that has not lost at least one of its members in the War. The experience of the Second World War has led the world leaders to seriously ponder over the consequences of an imminent nuclear menace. To give effect to that today we find world wide movements and congregations in support of peace, amity and brotherhodd. The message of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, is the message of peace, amity and world-brotherhood. That message can indicate the path of survival in the fear-stricken world of today. I personally feel that in the context of the present nuclear menace which is gradually engulfing the earth, it is very much essential to disseminate the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda all over the world. There is no doubt that their message was necessary and relevant in India and the world of their times ; but it is still more necessary and relevant in the present Indian context and in the context of the contemporary world. That is why a large number of Soviet scholars and thinkers has dedicated themselves to the study of Ramakrishna, and particularly Swami Vivekananda. I am proud that I was able to play the role of a pioneer of this study in our country."

In recognition of the great services rendered in the field of studies on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Dr. E.P. Chelishev was appointed a honorary Vice-President of the 'Committee for Comprehensive Study of

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement' set up by the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 1982. In his reply (dated 28 November 1983) indicating his acceptance of the said office, Dr. Chelishev wrote to the working President of the said Committee: "I consider it a great honour for me to be associated with any programme connected with Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. I and my colleagues will continue to devote to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies with close co-operation of the scholars in India and other countries. I gladly agree to your proposal of being a Vice-President of the Committee for Comprehensive Study of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement and I will do my best to contribute to the development of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies in the progressive direction. I consider this to be a service to the humanity at large."

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING: A MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE

DR. S.K. CHAKRABORTY

It was revealing to read the following candid lines in a recent book on management by two American authors[1]:

'America's boardrooms need *heroes* more than Hollywood's box offices need them. *Heroism is a leadership component* that is all but forgotten by modern management. Since the 1920's, the corporate world has been powered by managers who are rationalists.... But we are not talking about good "scientific" managers here. Managers run institutions; *heroes create them*' (emphasis ours). And this crown of 'the hero' was exactly what Romain Rolland had conferred in 1931 on Vivekananda, while concluding the chapter on 'The Ramakrishna Mission' in his biography of the latter.[2] The same American authors also refer to the key role of *values* in the shaping of corporate culture, and assert that 'In creating values that will work, managers are *forced to live life* as they say they would... whatever the circumstances'[3] (emphasis ours). Exactly this is what Prof. Rao, an eminent Indian economist and educator, had concluded after referring to a fiery letter of Vivekananda from America to a disciple in Madras[4]:

'These forceful words only indicate the importance he attached to *values* and how they should dominate every walk of life, ... and values also included a deliberate attempt to *practice them in one's personal life* (emphasis ours).

We have, therefore, made a humble effort here to inform primarily our contemporary organisation builders, managers, and administrators that a careful study of the leadership, the institution-building aspect of Vivekananda's multi-dimensional personality, should prove to be highly rewarding. It would indeed be supreme folly to brush aside this contribution of his under the false stereotype that, after all, he has been only a world-shunning monk who had created a spiritual outfit for other-worldly pursuits! Nothing can be farther from the truth.

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1. Terrence, D. and Kennedy, A: *Corporate Cultures* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 37.
2. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 146.
3. *Corporate Cultures*, op. cit., p. 33.
4. Rao, VKRV; *Swami Vivekananda*, (Government of India, Publications Division, 1979), p. 219.

I. *The Sacro-Secular Keynote: The First Principle.*

The double-winged Ramakrishna Math and Mission (RKMM), as it evolved during the period 1886-1987, is an institutional embodiment of the oracle uttered by Shri Ramakrishna to Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda): 'Serve *shiva* in *jeeva*'.[5] The inherent *Shiva* is sacred, the apparent *jeeva* secular. Out of this seed grew the stem: '*atmano mokshartham, jagat hitaya cha.*' This was Vivekananda's re-articulation of the mission for the missionaries of the sacro-secular adventure. In this essay an attempt is being made to glean a range of ideas and principles, implanted by Vivekananda in this sacro-secular institution, for consideration by the modern secular organisations of India. It may be worthwhile to remember that when the RKMM was constituted and its foundations laid, no formal management literature on leadership, organisation development, institution-building and the like, existed. Yet, to-day the RKMM is an international institution, with more than 120 centres, carrying an immense stock of trust, gratitude, and credibility about its sacro-secular contributions to humanity.

It seems that the sacro-secular symbiosis is the very first lesson modern institution-builders, at least in India, may like to learn from Vivekananda's conceptual framework. The sacred, the pure, the enduring is always rooted in the transempirical. This helicopter-flight, as it were, to a higher altitude, helps the mind to recapture perspective and breadth of vision. If then it descends to the empirical ground, it is much more likely that our mind can tackle and negotiate the ground-level problems with greater maturity, balance and hence effectiveness. The secular is then better manageable in the clear inner light of the sacred.

One of the chief mistakes of the contemporary managerial mind is to consider the secular and the sacred as contradictory forces. It is caught in an 'either-or' trap. But in authentic tune with the Indian genius, Vivekananda had asked us to spiritualise (i.e., sacralise the secular); nothing to him was secular—everything was spiritual.[6] To prevent the secular from turning profane, use of the purifying reagent of the sacred or the spiritual is essential. The drama of *Chandashoka* being transformed into *Dharmashoka* is the most cherished Indian symbol of this sacro-secular symbiosis. The Indian Empire of Mind had attained its largest and best—as a *consequence* of this transmutation.

Let us examine, therefore, in some detail how this first principle has found amplification in Vivekananda's endeavour.

II. *Vivekananda's Insights Into a Leader's Qualities.*

Let us reproduce here a set of ideas, enunciated with intuitive spontaneity by Vivekananda, which may help us to develop the outlines of a theory of leadership:

(1) 'I am persuaded that a leader is *not made in one life.* He *has to be born* for it. For the difficulty is not in organisation, and making plans; the test, the real test of a leader, lies in holding *widely different people together,* along the line of their common sympathies. And this can only be done *unconsciously,* never by trying'[7] (emphasis ours).

(2) 'It is selfishness that we must seek to eliminate! I find that whenever I have made mistake in my life, it was always because *self* entered into the calculation. Where *self has not been involved,* my judgment has gone straight to the mark.'[8] (emphasis ours).

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5. Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission,* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), p. 18, 27.

6. Rao, VKRV; op. cit., p. 174.

7. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I saw him,* (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1977), p. 96-97.

(3) 'More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, *doing its duty silently*, steadily, from moment to moment, and hour to hour.'[9] (emphasis ours).

(4) '... it is a very difficult task to take on the role of a leader. One must be *dasasya dasah* —a servent of servants, and must accommodate a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or *selfishness*, then you are a leader.'[10]

(5) 'Know *partiality* to be the chief cause of all evil.'[11] (emphasis ours).

(6) 'It is absolutely necessary to the work that I should have the enthusiastic love of as many as possible, while I myself remain *entirely impersonal*. Otherwise jealousy and quarrels will break up everything. A leader must be *impersonal*...'[12] (emphasis ours).

(7) 'Do not try to lead your brothers, but *serve them*. The brutal mania for leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life.'[13] (emphasis ours).

(8) 'Be the servant of all, and do not try in the least to govern others. ... Nobody will come to help you if you put yourself forward as a leader. ... *Kill self first* if you want to succeed.'[14] (emphasis ours).

Let us explore a bit the implications of excerpts (1) and (6) in particular. When Vivekananda says that 'a leader is not made in one life' he, in effect, is affirming the theory of repeated births and strivings towards a great goal or mission. One human life-span is probably inadequate to attain the peak of excellence in leadership or other attainments. So, when in an individual's present existence, working itself out before our eyes, we notice an apparently inexplicable efflorescence of superlative qualities of head and heart, instead of calling it a freak of Nature, we should adopt the more rational view that there can be no *effect* without a preceding *cause*. So, when the likes of Shankaracharyas or Vivekanandas burst upon the human stage, we should be able to visualise the unswerving toil of several births which must have been the underlying 'investment' for the 'return' of leadership excellence now reaped from them by the society in which they are born. To be a 'born leader' one has indeed to work very very hard, adopting a very long-term view of the soul's journey through many lives.

The second point about the first excerpt is that, a 'born leader' possesses the transcendent, trans-empirical, intuitive sure-touch quality of inspiring a whole set of people working with him. The past labours of the present leader have made the process of unifying diverse minds, for a cause, look effortlessly spontaneous. In other words, achievement of effortlessness in the leadership role is indeed founded on efforts—exerted in existences outside the pale of the leader's own and our view.

In excerpt (6) Vivekananda stresses upon the 'impersonal' orientation of a leader. The expectations of organisational members regarding fairness, objectivity, integrity, consistency and the like in the course of hundreds of daily decision-making issues, often petty but at times momentous, can be ensured only by the *impersonality* in the leader's mental make-up. This does not mean cold apathy, or brutal indifference. It means that, like Buddha, if necessary, even the leader's own son Rahula can be openly chastised and debarred from functioning in the organisation, if found falling short of norms and standards laid down for all.[15] Do the offices of leadership at the highest levels in India have a lesson to learn from this principle ?

References to the 'killing of self first' (excerpt 8), and to the elimination of even

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8. Ibid., p. 150.
9. Ibid., p. 165.
10. *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Edition, 1959), Vol. VI. p. 322.
11. Ibid., p. 324.
12. *Complete Works*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 429.
13. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976, p. 108.
14. Ibid., p. 228-229.
15. Carus, P ; *The Gospel of Buddha*, (Madras; Samata Books, 1987), p. 143-145.

a 'shade of selfishness' (excerpt 4) resonate perfectly with the impersonality principle cited above. It is the father's or mother's personal i.e., 'self-ish' love, rather *moha*, about one's offspring(s) which causes erosion of credibility and trust amongst others. Leaders in organisations also have their 'offsprings'. The little self of the leader rallies around them, partiality is born, and dedicated excellence dies.

It is a remarkable psychological principle which Vivekananda transmits to us through his confession in excerpt (2). His judgements and decisions had been unerring whenever his self had not interposed itself as a filter or screen between the situation on the one side and the decision on the other. The selfish, impure, unripe empirical self of which we often are so mistakenly conceited, always distorts our perspective. Hence objective decision-making remains a chimera. So, via *jnana marga* one may try to eliminate altogether this lower self. But only Vivekanandas can do that. What can lesser leaders do ?

This is where excerpts (3) and (7) make more practical sense to the ordinary mortal. The imagery of the little worm, doing its duty minute by minute, silently, is remarkably powerful. This may be contrasted with the current popular cry for 'dynamic' leadership which is, more often than not, just loud yet empty talk, and little performance. The principle is: the greatest acts are done in the deepest silence. Thus, to begin to consider the silent but intense performance of any duty falling to one's lot as a privilege to serve the *shiva* in *jeeva*, is more mellow route to follow than the scorching path of altogether denying the self (lower).

(To be continued)

SERVING GOD IN HOMELESS HUMANITY

(Ramakrishna Mission Boy's Home, Rahara, West Bengal)

(Illustrated)

SWAMI RAMANANDA

Shri Ramakrishna taught the new gospel of "Serving all beings as God Himself." Swami Vivekananda echoed his master's words, "God is best manifested in Man. Service to mankind is, therefore, the best form of worship." Vivekananda knew that *Annadana* (offering of food) alone would not be enough ; it must be followed by *Vidyadana* (offering knowledge) and finally *Dharmadana* (offering of spiritual strength).

He said, "Our work should be mainly educational, both moral and intellectual", for "all the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves."

The Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home at Rahara, not far from Calcutta, is one Branch Centre of the Mission where large-scale experiments on this line have been going for more than four decades.

The great Bengal Famine of 1942 left a large number of homeless orphan children with none to take care of them. True to its objectives and traditions, Ramakrishna Mission immediately came forward to share the responsibility of tackling this national problem. Swami Punyanandaji Maharaj, a senior monk, was entrusted with the task of organising the service. The sight for an orphanage was selected at Rahara, then a rather undeveloped village some 20 Kilometres to the North of Calcutta. At that stage came the most generous offer from the late Shri Satish Chandra Mukherjee of the Basumati Sahitya Mandir, who made a gift of his entire Rahara property to the Rama-

krishna Mission for the purposes of setting up of the orphanage in memory of his beloved son Ramachandra and daughter Priti both of whom had died prematurely. The foundation was thus laid on firm grounds for an orphanage that in time grew into one of the biggest in this region and later developed into a big educational complex.

The Home formally began to function from Ist September, 1944, with just 37 orphan boys. The inauguration ceremony was earlier performed on 16th August, 1944 by Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj, the then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission. Under the able stewardship of Punyanandaji Maharaj and with devoted assistance of monastic and other workers, the Home made rapid strides and more and more orphan boys were accommodated.

A school was immediately started for the education of the children. The elder boys were admitted to a High School at Khardah, a nearby village. Arrangements were made within for training of the boys in tailoring, weaving, paper-making, typewriting and painting.

The number of orphans swelled to about 200 by the end of 1948. The needs of the Home also increased. More land and building were made available and the campus extended. Today the entire complex occupies an area of about 50 acres.

From time to time munificent donations greatly helped the growth of the Home. Late Nirmal Kumar Dey, Shri Mayamoy Mitra, Shri Upananda Mukherjee, the Birla Seva Trust, and late Jyotish Chandra Paul made substantial donations of funds and properties for the growth and maintenance of the Home. The Government of West Bengal has been steadily helping the Boys' Home by offering both recurring and non-recurring grants.

The boys admitted to the Home usually belong to the age group of 8 to 12 years at the time of admission. They are retained here till the end of their school career, or until they completed eighteen years of age, whichever is earlier.

There are also a few boys whose maintenance and other expenses are all met by The Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home. The total number of the boys now being maintained here exceeds 700, including 40 adivasi boys maintained with Govt. assistance.

All educational facilities, general, technical, or vocational, are made available to the boys. The different Institutions that have gradually come up in course of time have turned the Home into one of the biggest and finest educational complexes in the State.

A Primary School was founded which turned itself into a unit of Junior Basic School with classes I to V. A Senior Basic School with classes VI to VIII was also started, which from 1970 was named Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home Junior High School. Besides, there is the High School, which was upgraded to a Higher Secondary Multipurpose School in 1957 and approved by the Government of India as a model experimental multipurpose School. It is also approved by the Government of India for placement of resident students under their Merit Scholarship Scheme. Today nearly 80% of the school students pass in Ist Division. In 1961, a Nursery School was added to the list of Schools for general education.

Vocational education was given emphasis from the very start of the Institution and all Ashrama boys are encouraged to take training in one or the other, such as tailoring, carpentry, printing, bookbinding, electronics, etc. Gradually more trades were added. The boys have the opportunity to be trained in such trades as Turning, Fitting, welding Electrical Repairing and the like.

To provide a high level technical training a Junior Technical School was started from 1956. It runs a three year course in different Engineering trades leading to the Junior Diploma in Engineering. Boys who secure First Division with at least 50% marks in Mathematics are eligible for admission to the LEE & MEE Courses in a Polytechnic.

A Higher Secondary Vocational Institute in the Technical Stream with Classes XI and XII was started from 1976-1977. It offers a two year course of training in Mechanical, Electrical and Automobile Servicing and Maintenance.

During the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, a Degree College under the name Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Centenary College was established. Swami Vireswaranandaji, the then General Secretary of the Mission, laid the foundation Stone on 3rd December, 1961 and Shri Morarji Desai, then Finance Minister of the Government of India, inaugurated the college. Monks of the Ramakrishna Mission act as principal and teachers of the college, besides others in various departments. Along with pass course the college offers B.Sc. Honours Course in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Botany, and Zoology. A Higher Secondary Unit in the Science Stream with Classes XI and XII has been introduced from 1977.

The Home runs two residential Teachers' Training College each with an intake capacity of 100 trainees and offering a one year course. The total student population in all the institutions is more than 4000, of whom nearly 1050 are resident including the 700 orphan, destitute and adivasi boys.

The District Library of North 24-Parganas, is under the management of the Boys' Home and located in its campus. Established in 1955, it has now nearly 44,000 books, 10 daily newspapers and 23 periodicals. There is a Mobile Service Unit which feeds nearly 50 rural libraries in the neighbourhood, and a Librarianship Training Centre which offers a six month course to 30 trainees at a time, in the management of rural libraries.

A well-equipped Audio-visual Unit is also an important feature of the Boys' Home.

The Boys' Home runs a 52-bed indoor hospital. The Out-door Dispensary serves the poor section of the local population.

An E.N.T. Section and a Homoepathic Out-door Unit are also run under qualified doctors. The number of patients at the Out-door Dispensary during the last three years was 19,261 (1985-1986), 13,370 (1986-1987), and 19, 266 (1987-1988).

The Primary concern of the authorities here is to maintain and educate the boys so that they may grow into healthy, self-disciplined, intelligent youngmen, with genuine love for the glorious heritage of the country. Great emphasis is laid on character building, and development of a broad and generous outlook on life. Students follow a strict daily routine, which includes attendance at morning and evening prayers. A proper dietary chart is maintained, and ample scope is given for games sports and other physical activities. Large playgrounds are maintained for the purpose. Various co-curricular activities such as dramatic performances, debates, elocution, vocal as well as instrumental music, are included in the programme of their education.

In the earlier years many of the boys admitted to the Home belonged to educated families rendered destitute as a consequence of the partition of the country. Today, however, most of the boys come from slums or some even sent from jails. It requires very special care for the education of these unfortunate children. Most of them are incapable of following the regular courses of study. So adequate facilities are provided for practical training in some useful trade or vocation, for a happy future placement in life.

Forty four years have passed since the inception of the orphanage. Today many of the ex-students of the Home have come out successfully as lawyers, executives, engineers, teachers, artists, sportsmen and technicians. Some even joined the Ramakrishna Order as monks. Once a year they come for a get-together in their reunion of the Boys' Home, and pay respects to the holy precints where the monks of the Mission one day accepted the neglected and homeless boys like themselves, as the very images of God.

THE STORY OF DIVYAYAN

SWAMI SUDDHAVRATANANDA

(*Illustrated*)

The Genesis

The first few years of this Century proved to be a fascinating period for the Ramakrishna Movement. The lofty ideas preached by Swami Vivekananda, testified by the experience of Shri Ramakrishna, were gradually getting transformed into action. The worship of GOD in MAN was finding its expression in various projects launched by the Ramakrishna Order.

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi, was initially a quiet, retreat centre, sanctified by the holy presence of Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj. Gradually it changed its dimension in the last two decades and today this place is the harbinger of a new mighty movement.

The year 1966-67 saw many changes in Ranchi Ashrama. The centre's involvement in the relief operations of the drought of Bihar in 1966-67, brought about a sea-change in its sphere of activity. The suffering of the people because of the drought made the Mission conscious about the sad plight of the farmers, particularly in and around Chotanagpur belt and also the pitiable state of agriculture as well as the living condition of the rural poor. Inhospitable land conditions, poor irrigation facilities combined with absolute ignorance of the scientific techniques of agriculture farming, were the prime factors for the backwardness of farmers in the Chotanagpur region. The Mission also realised that the hill-people would continue to be at the mercy of hostile nature, unless some action was initiated to bring a change in their outlook and working condition. Education of the farmers was felt to be of prime need. However, it was not education in the ordinary sense. Education and educators had to be taken to the villages, even to the door-steps of these backward citizens of India.

Divyayan Takes Birth

As a first step towards a comprehensive service to the tribals and the backward classes of this area the Ashrama at Ranchi, embarked on a novel venture named DIVYAYAN (the Divine way) in 1969. It was a concept based on a total approach for rehabilitation of these people through education, agriculture, cottage farming, etc., leading towards a spiritual fulfilment in their lives. The programme had three-fold objectives: social, economic and spiritual. And it started to work at the grass-roots level.

With very limited resources Divyayan started in a modest way. Initially it was housed in an asbestos-roofed-building, and with some sort of a make-shift hostel to accommodate 20 farmers. The aim was to transfer need-based agricultural technology to the trainee farmers, applying low-cost, non-monetary inputs, and using learning-by-doing technique. The farmer trainees stayed in the hostel for the training period.

The success of the initial programme and its inherent potentiality made the Mission to adopt it as a permanent programme. Gradually facilities for training the farmers in different disciplines of agriculture and other related areas and also land for demonstration in and around Divyayan, were acquired. Two demonstration farms measuring 140 acres each at a distance of about 35 k.m. from Divyayan with somewhat identical soil condition to those prevailing in Chotanagpur area, added. With the creation of the above infrastructure, Divyayan started working in full swing.

In the very first year of operation, it was realised that merely propagating the rudiments of improved agricultural technology and providing field experience to the farmers, were not enough to pose a challenge to the dismal situation. Moulding of character and

creation of self confidence in young farmers through a man-making education of Swami Vivekananda, was felt of vital importance. Then only it could be expected that the transferred technology/skill could remain sustained, and each Divyayan ex-trainee could function as a pioneer-leader for the entire village.

A team from ICAR, (Indian council of Agricultural Research), New Delhi, visited Divyayan in 1974, to study the on-going programme and witness the process of training along with its impact. The structure of the project and the developed infrastructure caused the Committee to feel immensely pleased and satisfied and realised that the proposed KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) scheme was more or less the Divyayan programme already in practice. At their behest ICAR decided to establish a Krishi Vigyan Kendra under the supervision and management of Divyayan. Thus Divyayan transferred itself from Divyayan to *Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra.*

Training Programme

With the adoption of KVK Scheme, Divyayan broad-based its training infrastructure and could cover more disciplines in agriculture in order to give a wider coverage. Keeping in view the needs of the farmers and also the period suitable to their availability, the content and the duration of the training programmes at Divyayan have been formulated. The On-Campus programmes, which are residential, are of the intensive type. The Motivational courses of 6 weeks duration form the basic component of the On-campus training. Efforts are primarily devoted to impart preliminary training of improved methods and practices of agriculture and allied disciplines. Special practice-oriented training courses, forming the extension of Motivational training, are of longer duration in order to impart more intensive training towards achieving greater proficiency in any of the special areas—agronomy, horticulture, poultry and dairy farming, bee-keeping, workshop trades, pump repairs, etc. Besides the On-campus programmes, Off-campus programmes are also arranged where the training faculty with their aids and devices reach the farmers for training them at their very doorsteps.

Under *Lab-to-Land* programme, the agriculture extension worker takes out his Laboratory achievements to the fields of the beneficiary farmer for wider application and adaption. Divyayan is also engaged in this process of transferrence to help the practising farmers to derive the benefits of technological achievements.

It has been experienced at Divyayan from the very early stages that whatever efforts may be invested in training, a constant *follow-up and village extension* programme is essential. The two aspects of motivation and follow-up, therefore, have been included and integrated with the training programme. For this purpose, regular visits to villages contacting the farmers, conducting training and demonstration through audio-visual programmes, are extensively carried out. It is further intensified through the distribution of a monthly newsletter in Hindi *Divyayan Samachar*, arranging Kishan Mela, Field days in the villages, and arranging ex-trainees' Sammelans on regular basis. *Ramakrishna Seva Kendra*, an ancillary Institution, established for the purpose of effective follow-up of ex-trainees has also been rendering valuable help and service to Divyayan.

But then Divyayan also realised very well that unless such enterprises were undertaken by the villagers and for the villagers through a collective approach, the sustenance of such programmes could be very doubtful. This calls for creation of an atmosphere in the village suitable for developing an organisation at village level. Fortunately the Divyayan ex-trainees' clusters spread over in different villages, proved to be a handy material. On account of the training received at

Divyayan and the subsequent follow-up and extension programmes, these ex-trainees were motivated for an active peoples' participation and combined easily to form self-help groups in the villages called *Vivekananda Seva Sangha*. These Seva Sanghas have moulded themselves to adopt uniform working rules and management procedures.

With the help of Divyayan these Seva Sanghas have been able to build assets in the villages like agricultural implements, pumps, sprayers and dusters, and also customers' service to cater to the need of inputs like seeds, fertilizers, etc. They are also engaging in construction of community centres in the villages and dug-wells for irrigation purpose entirely through their own initiative and labour. Cultivation on waste-land with Arjuna, the host plants for tasar cocoon-rearing, and development of human resources like skilled masons, mechanics, silk reelers, organisational managers, are also being achieved through and by the Seva Sanghas.

In order to encourage small entrepreneurship in the villages, Divyayan makes special efforts by giving the beneficiaries the required training, making available the necessary equipment, working capital, and also facilities for marketing the produce. The creation of honey cluster, poultry farming, Tasar cocoon-rearing and reeling, manufacturing of precast cement blocks for construction of dwelling houses, are some of the achievements.

Visualising Chotanagpur's extensive forest wealth as a rich source for bee-keeping, Divyayan has made arrangements for training in bee-keeping on scientific lines. Along with the training, bee-hives production in Divyayan Carpentry-shop through the trainees has also been undertaken to make available the hives to the trained bee-keepers in the villages. The programme has met with unexpected success and the farmers in 26 villages of Ranchi are now actively engaged in this small-investment and income-generating enterprise. The peak production by the ex-trainees registered so far was during 1986 season when 60 quintals of honey were marketed by Divyayan.

During the initial stages, Divyayan with its limited resources, could not undertake the responsibility of follow-up of the ex-trainees and conduct the village extension programmes. To meet the above requirement, a separate Institution called *Ramakrishna Seva Kendra* was started at Ranchi in 1970 through the help of some well-meaning professionals of Calcutta. This organisation undertook the responsibility of follow-up programme of the ex-trainees.

The Future

Two decades in the life of an institution like Divyayan is too small a period to pass any judgement. The district of Ranchi where Divyayan is located has 2,110 villages divided into 20 development Blocks, Divyayan is effective in only about 100 villages spread over in 10 Blocks. Although the immediate contribution of Divyayan may look insignificant, its sustained efforts are expected to transform the life-style of the rural poor: socially, economically, and spiritually.

Vivekananda saw in vision the rising of a new India **from the hills and** forests. Today the monks of Vivekananda, through Divyayan, have started realising this vision for the making of a new society in the Chotanagpur areas, which is educationally sound, economically and socially strong, and spiritually confident.

Achievements of Divyayan at a Glance

1. No. or farmers trained in six-weeks course About 4,000
2. No. of farmers trained in special training About 1,500
3. No. of off-campus programmes arranged About 300
4. No. of farmers trained in off-campus programme About 15,000
5. Percentage of S/C, S/T and B/C among trainees About 75%

6. No. of field demonstration and programmes in the villages About 1,000
7. No. of Audio-visual programmes organised About 1,800
8. No. of film shows organised About 1,600
9. No. of villages covered by Audio-visual Unit About 1,000
10. No. of night schools organised by ex-trainees of Divyayan About 50
11. No. of monthly Youth leaders' meeting About 60
12. No. of annual Sammelan of ex-trainees organised About 7
13. No. of annual Kishan Melas organised About 10
14. Plantation of Arjun trees under Community Forestry in villages About 21
15. No. of Vivekananda Seva Sanghas (Divyayan self-help groups) in the villages About 31
16. Distribution of farm implements to reach the villagers through the clubs:
250 pump sets, sprayers, dusters, Birsa seed cum fertilizer drills, irrigation pipes, etc.
17. No. of community centres to be completed with pre-fabricated blocks and roof elements for housing 25 Vivekananda Seva Sanghas and for Input centres 25 Nos.
18. Construction of dug wells already done in the villages 400

PRABUDDHA BHARATA: 90 YEARS AGO

Arise! awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! Katha Upa. I. iii. 14

No. 30 Vol. IV January 1899

Wanted Workers

Now that the home of Prabuddha Bharata has been transferred from the burning plains of Southern India, to the snow topped heights of the Himalayas, amidst a class of people comparatively unaffected for good or for evil, by the Western Civilisation. I.... beg leave to address you a few words on their behalf, for publication in your widely circulated paper. ... In my humble opinion, if there is a need in these parts which is crying all others down into inaudibleness, it is the need of educating these poor, hardy and simple mountaineers in the ideals of ancient India, in her traditional spirit of plain living and high thinking....

There are thousands of young men in the big Presidency Cities of India, to whom the call of the spirit is more potent than that of the flesh; and who can be infinitely more useful here, to themselves, as well as to others, than where they are at present. Would you not, Mr. Editor, wield your pen on behalf of this cause and organise a band of unselfish workers—Sanyasins and Brahmacharins in the true sense of the words—and thus be instrumental, in imparting in the right method, the right sort of education to the thousand Pahari Children among whom you live?

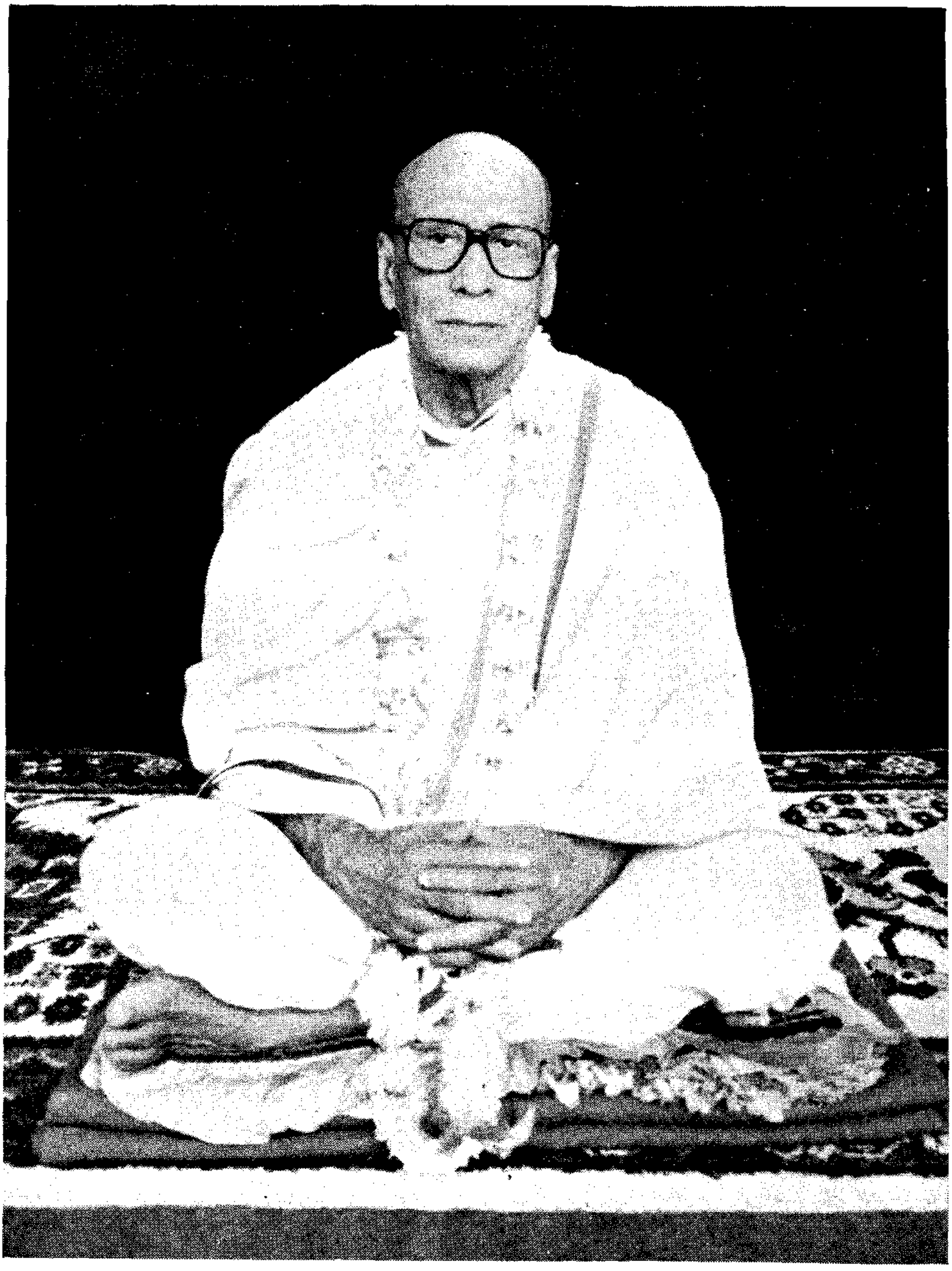
Our Calcutta Letter

The shadow of the Plague hung over Calcutta all last summer. The deaths on the spot were comparatively few, but there was the prospect of a serious epidemic at the beginning of the cold season. The Brotherhood at Belur, therefore, was much occupied with arrangements for the winter's work in this direction. Plans were made for the organisation of the nursing-parties, the distribution of medicines, training of inoculators, and so on. Thanks however to the effective measures taken by the authorities, and to favourable climatic conditions, all fear passed away during the month of September, and those who had been eager to give service were most happily disappointed....

The building of the new Math approaches completion, and the consecration is to take place during this month of December. The future Community-house is a simple and well-proportioned building, standing on its own land, on the right bank of the Ganges. The work of construction has been performed under the superintendence of a brother, who gave up engineering for Sannyas, and it has been thoroughly well performed. The broad expanse of the Ganges, the green trees on her banks, and the domes and gardens of Dakhsineshwar in the distance, form the view from the front of the house. Behind, under the shade of friendly trees, stands the Worship-Room, looking towards the setting sun. ...

The Mission has not been idle, however; for all its available strength has been devoted to the opening of a girls' school in Bag Bazar, and fresh activities are in preparation during this period of seeming quiet.

MAHĀSAMĀDHI OF SRIMAT SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDAJI MAHARAJ



We announce with profound sorrow that Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, Eleventh President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, entered *Mahasamadhi* on Tuesday, December 27,

1988 at 7.27 p.m. at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta. He was admitted to the hospital on the 24th December with severe lung-infection and cardiac problems. In spite of the best efforts of the attending physicians the end came suddenly. He was 90.

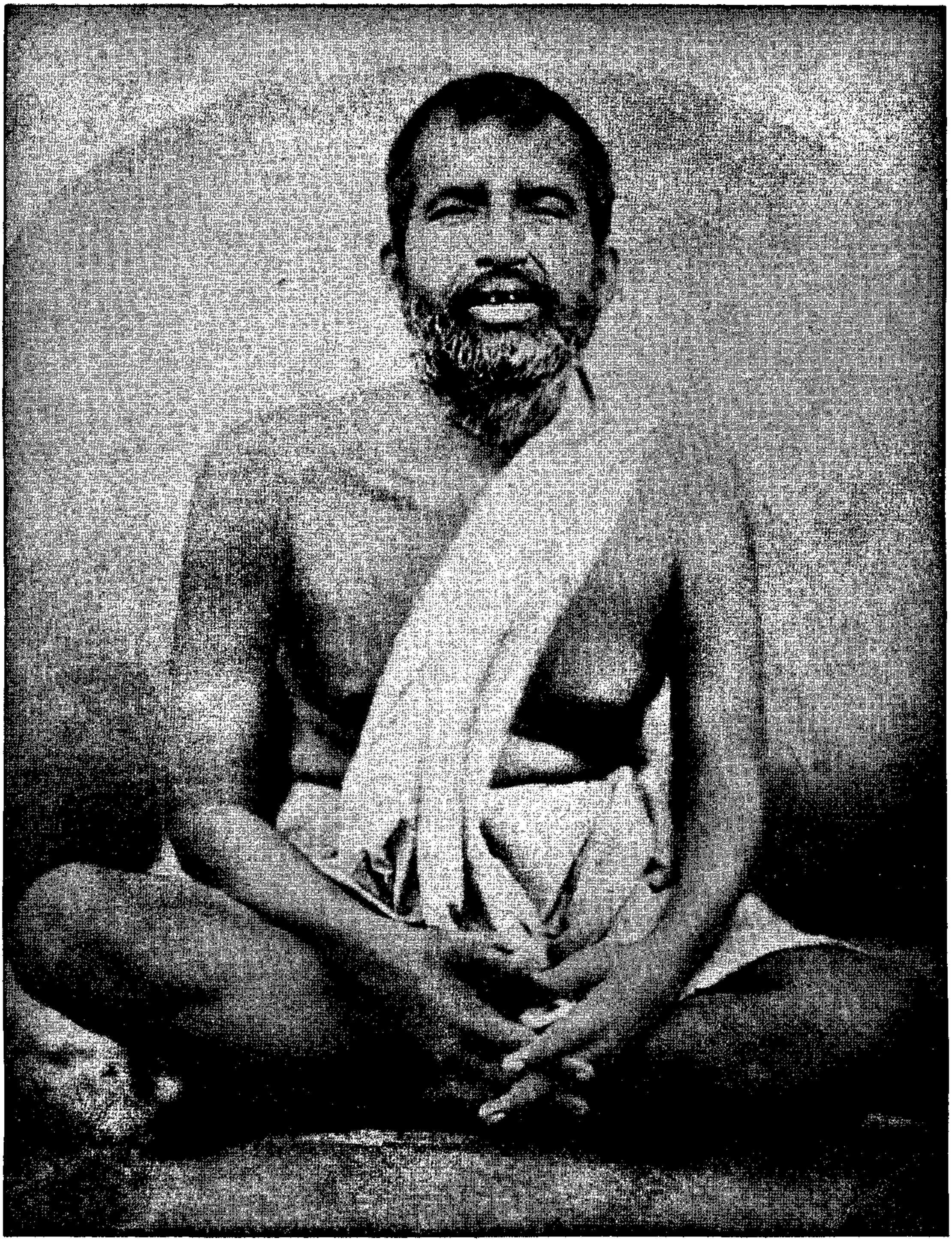
The Swami was born on February 11, 1899 in Sadhuhati, a village in the district of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). After graduating from the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, he joined the Ramakrishna Order in May 1923. A disciple of Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, Second President of the Order, he had his *Sannyasa* from his *guru* in 1928.

The Swami had an outstanding record of Service to the Organization. He became the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, in 1926 and continued there up to December 1935. He studied Sanskrit scriptures at Varanasi Advaita Ashrama. He served as a member of the Working Committee of the Math and Mission during 1936-41 and 1944-47. In the intervening period, he was the Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* for three years. Later, from 1953 to 1963, he was the President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. Appointed as a Trustee of the Order in March 1947, he became one of the Assistant Secretaries in April that year. He served in that capacity till 1953 and again from 1963 to 1966. Then he became the General Secretary of the Math and Mission. He was elected one of the Vice-Presidents in April 1979 and continued in that position till he became the Eleventh President of the Order in April 1985.

The Swami was an erudite scholar. His English version of the ten major *Upanishads,* the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Brahmasutras* with Shankara's commentary, and the Bengali version of the eleven major Upanishads, *Stavakusumanjali, Siddhanta-lesa-Samgraha,* earned appreciation from all quarters. Besides translations, he also published some original works. Of them, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* and *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* in English and *Sri Ma Sarada Devi, Yuganayak Vivekananda* (in 3 volumes) and *Sri Ramakrishna Bhaktamalika* in Bengali deserve special mention. He also edited the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (in 8 volumes) thoroughly and compiled and edited the *Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna*. Last few years he was engaged in translating into English Madhusudan Saraswati's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. His contribution to the Vedanta and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature had been immense.

In his passing away the Ramakrishna Math and Mission have sustained an irreparable loss. He leaves behind thousands of disciples and admirers throughout India and abroad to mourn his passing away.

May his soul rest in eternal peace!



Meditation Posture—London

MAYAVATI ADVAITA ASHRAMA

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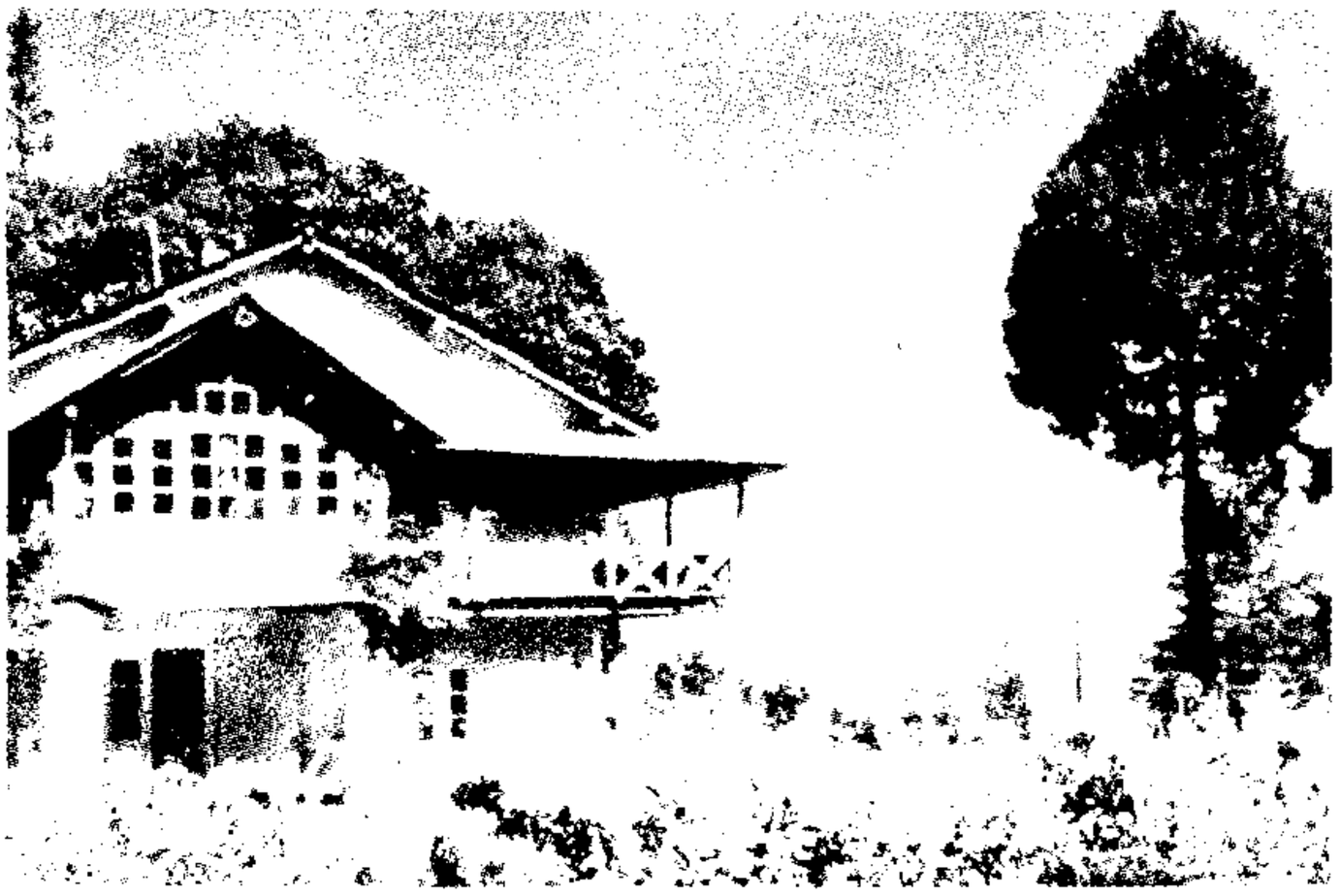

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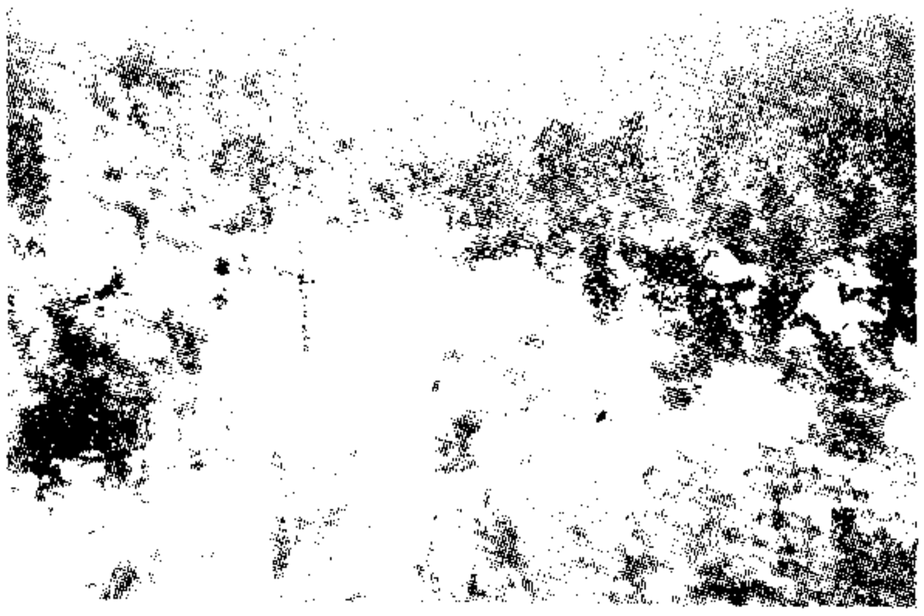
1. Snow View from Mayavati orchard. 2. Early morning view from the Ashrama. 3. Ashrama building with snow range. 4. Prahuddha Bharata Building. 5. Way to Mayavati.



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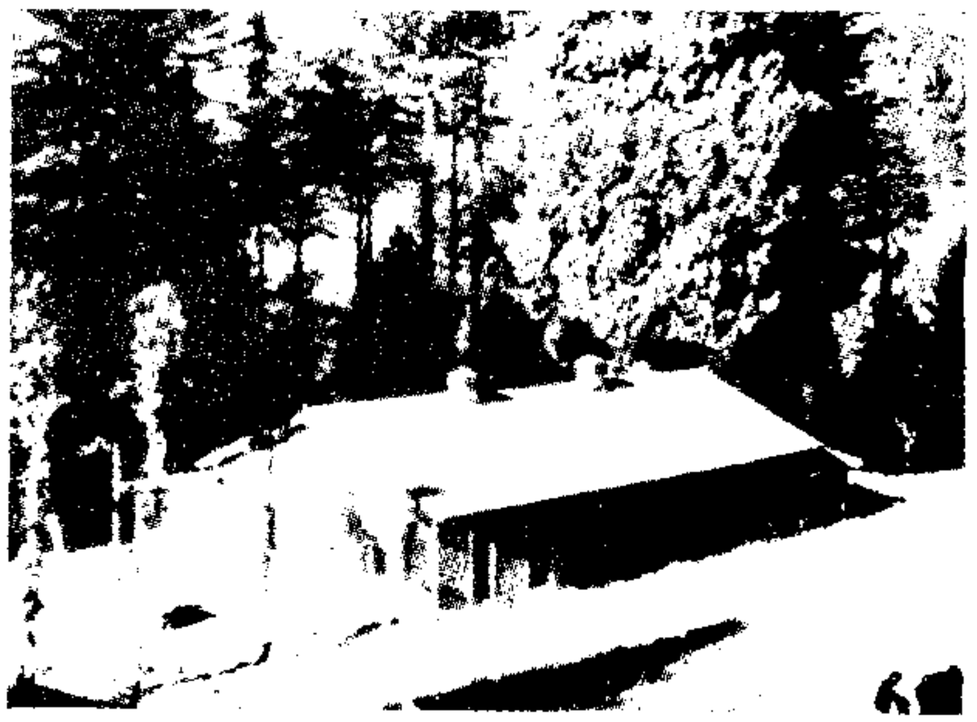

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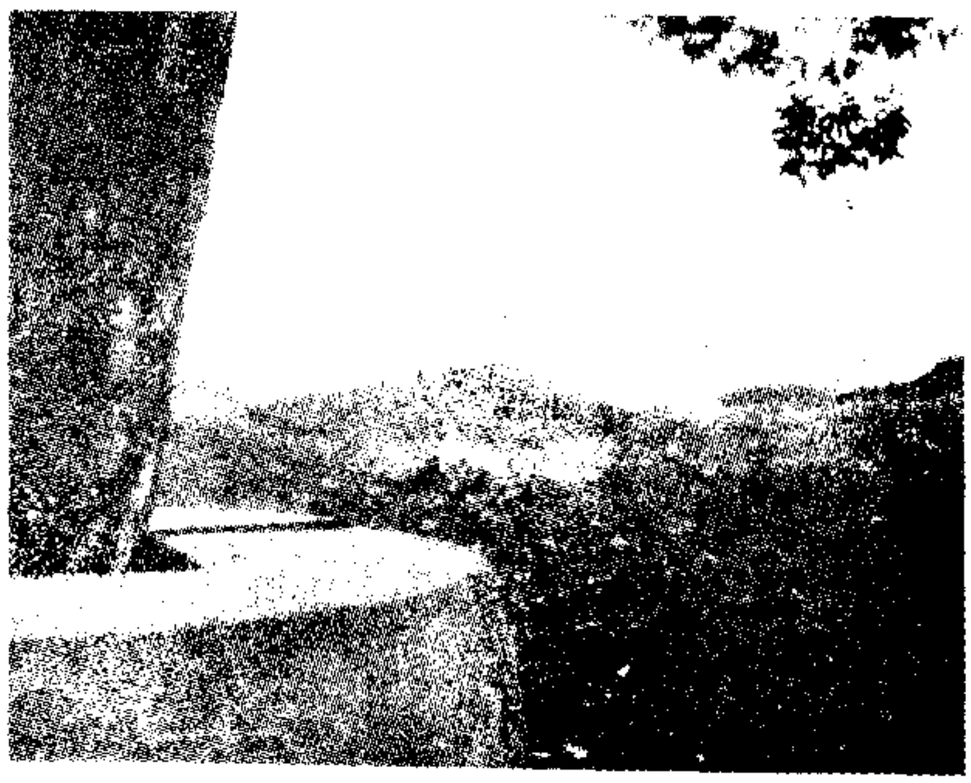

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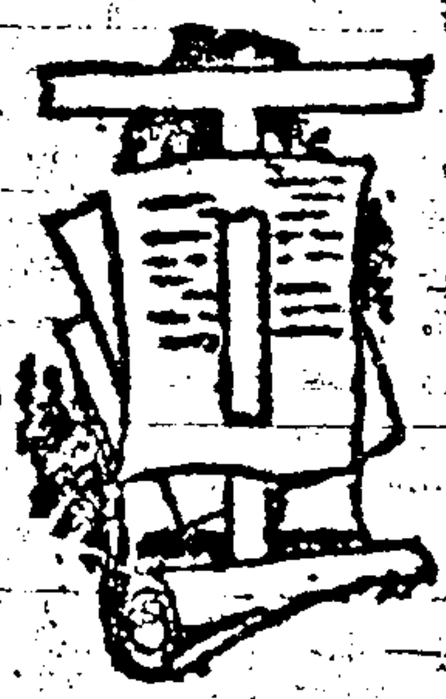
6. Dharamgarh Hill where Swamiji wanted to build a college & live. 7. Mother Sevier's Bungalow. 8. The fire-place in the library hall in front of which Swamiji lived for 15 days in 1901. 9. The old Oak—the place for meditation. 10. Mayavati in view. 11. Mayavati Charitable Hospital.

HAIL, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

A High-Caste Brahmin from India Is the Latest Social Fad.

PREACHING THE "HIGHER THOUGHT."

Picturesque, Interesting, Cultured and Well Bred, and Has Fascinating Liquid Eyes.



HE Swami Vivekananda is in town. Perhaps you know that in Hindu language swami means master, or rabbi, and that it is pronounced like Suwamee in the old song with an i substituted for an a. The rest of the swami's name, as near as English-speaking Occidentals can come to it, begins with Sye Brother. He smiles frequently when he is speaking, in a delightfully frank and magnetic fashion.

SWAMI VIVECANANDA, THE BRAHMIN PRIEST.

One of the most spacious Fifth avenue mansions has been put at the disposal of the ladies who wish to hear the Swami speak.

NEWS REPORT
On
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
From
NEW YORK WORLD, February 3, 1895

The Chicago Pose of Swamiji

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MADRAS

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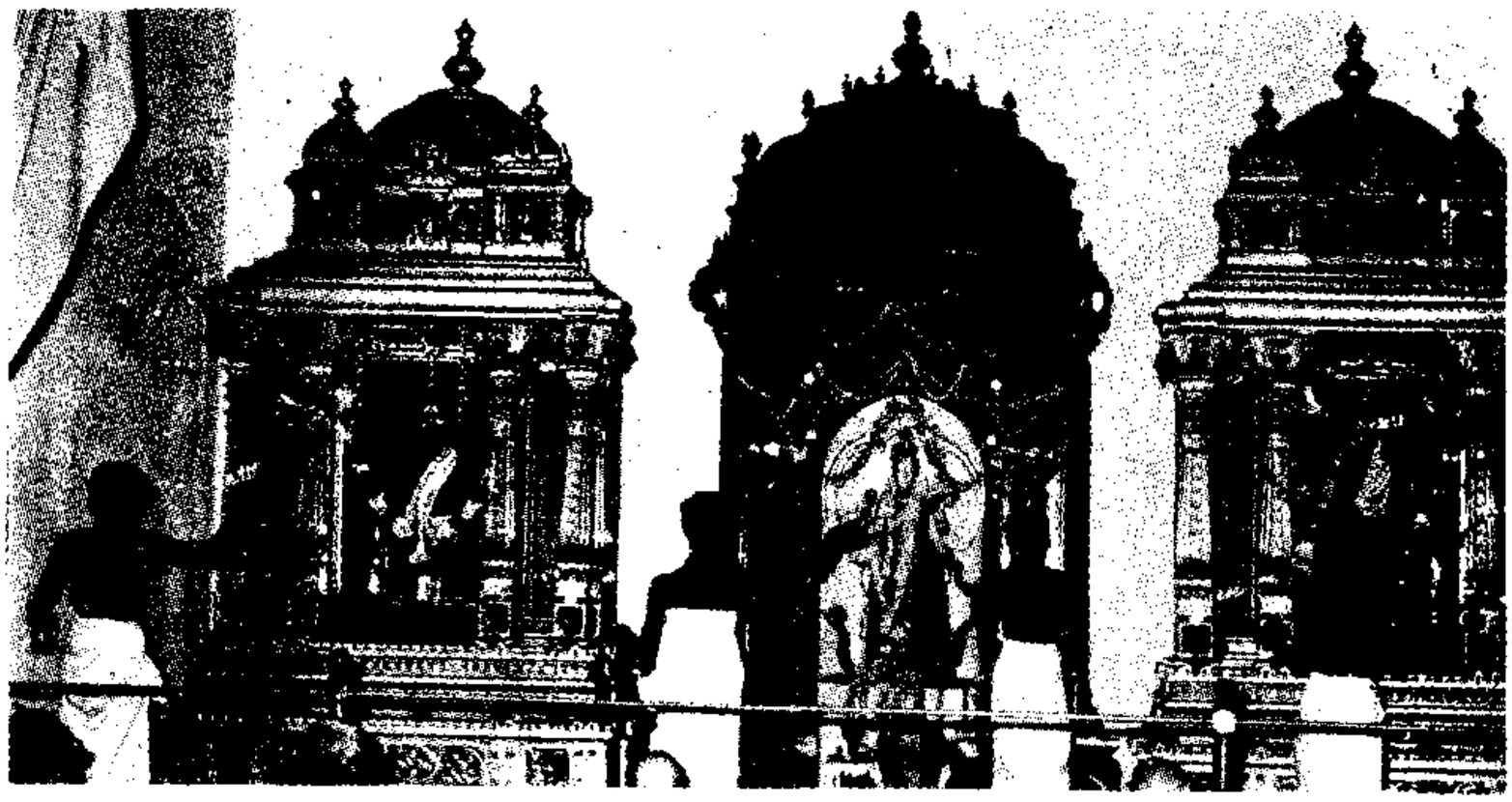

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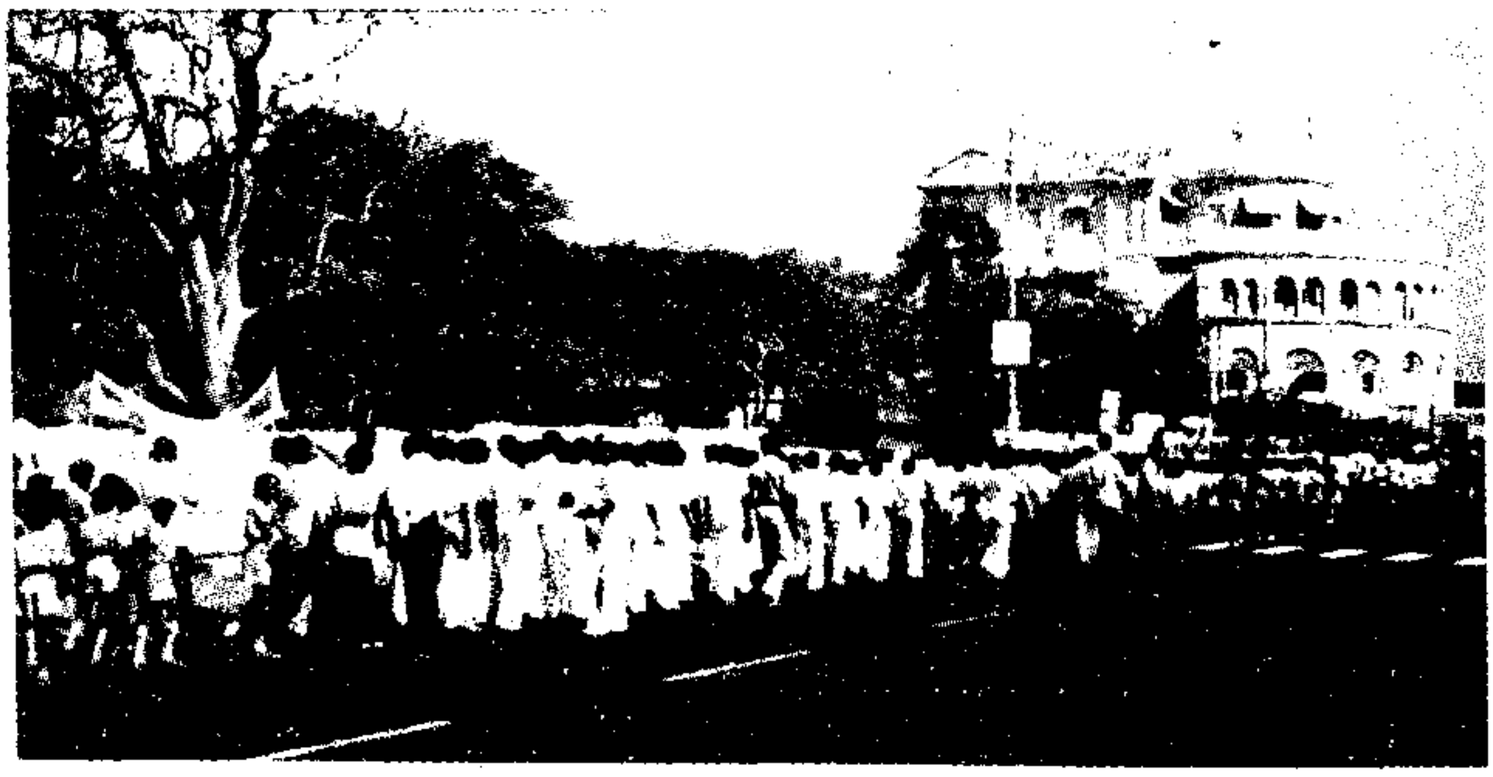

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1. A boy in cultural performance. 2. Evening aratrikam by the students. 3. M. G. Ramachandra in the Home. 4. Children's cultural performance. 5. Vocational training for senior boys. 6. Procession of students on Swamiji's birthday.

RAMAKRISHNA DARSHANAM : RAMAKRISHNA MATH, HYDERABAD

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1. Shri Ramakrishna and Some of His disciples. 2. Sodashipuja ; Harmony of Religions : Service to God in man. 3. Vision of Christ. 4. Similes and Parables of Shri Ramakrishna.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION BOYS' HOME, RAHARA

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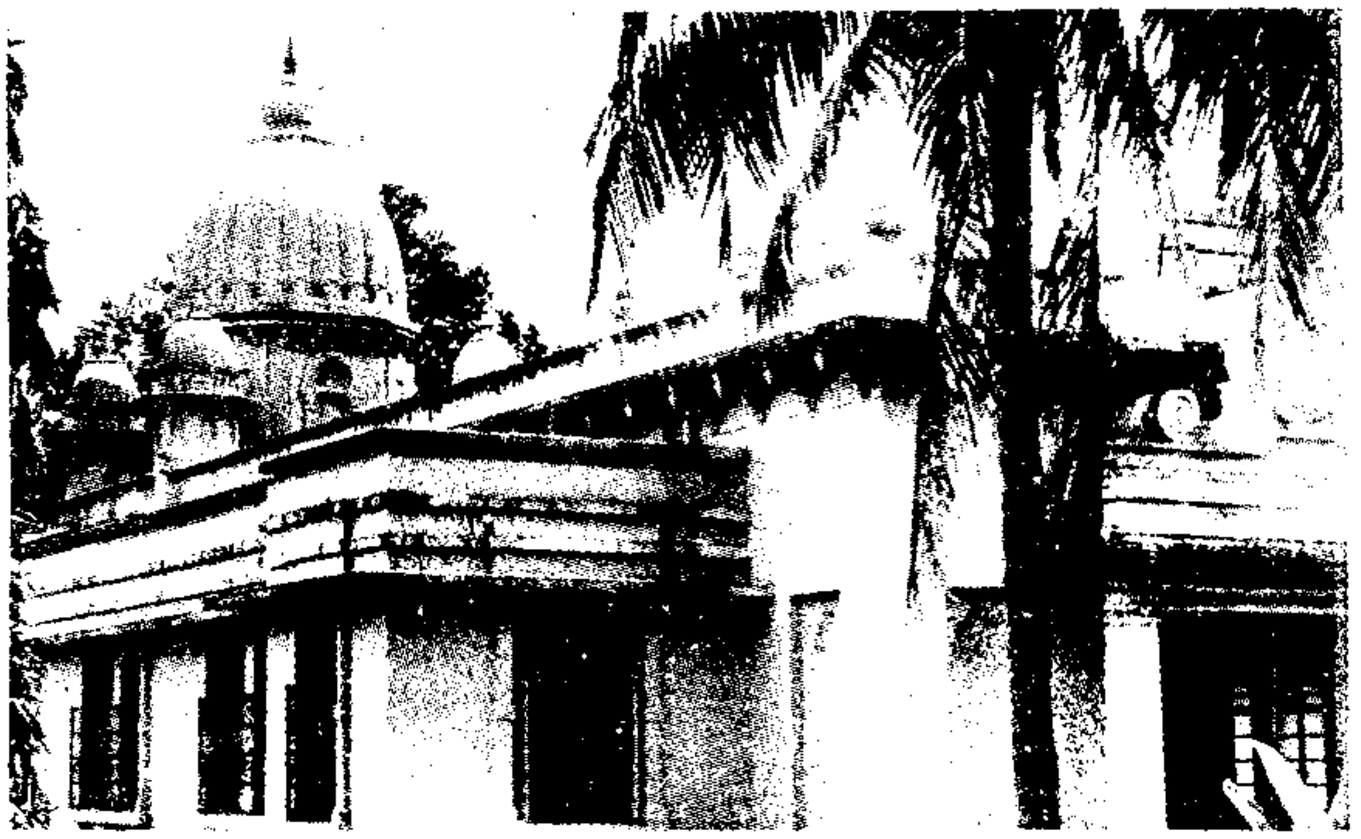

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1. Children's cultural Performance. 2. Shri Ramakrishna Temple of the Home. 3. Children's Congregatio
4. Rev. Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, Ex-President of the Math & Mission in the Home. 5. A portion o
the Home Campus. 6. N. C. C. Parade. 7. Vocational Training (Tailoring). 8. Dining Hall.

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Annual Ex-Trainees' Sammelan. 2. Exhibition of farmers' produce. 3. Paddy Cultivation. 4. Kisan Mela. Bee-Keeping. 6. Poultry-training 7. Training Workshop—trades.